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62nd year of publication

Mugabe clings to power

Harry der Nederlanden

In the recent elections in Zimbabwe held March 29, neither the incumbent President Mugabe nor opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai won a clear majority. It was widely reported that Tsvangirai, the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change [MDC] had a slight lead. At first the MDC called for a recount; however, Mugabe has delayed the process for over three weeks. The Electoral Commission was hand-picked by Mugabe and by now it has lost all credibility in the eyes of the opposition and any recount would not stand up to close scrutiny. There have been charges of vote-rigging and corruption in previous elections as well. Suspicions were deepened by the fact that when the Electoral Commission announced its plan for a recount, it targeted the districts in which the opposition had won small leads.

Tsvangirai has been living outside the country in recent months. His supporters have been subject to beatings and harassment by thugs from Mugabe's ruling party and by militias. According to Human Rights Watch, pro-government militias are arresting and beating anyone suspected of supporting the MDCV. Some 200 local opposition leaders have been treated in hospitals and several have been killed. Over 200 houses belonging to MDC supporters have been burned to the ground.

Since the March 29 polls, Mugabe's supporters, especially his gang of "war veterans", have also attacked and seized many of the remaining white farms in the country. Such seizures, initiated as land reform, have led to food shortages, so that Zimbabwe once an exporter of foodstuffs is now unable to feed its people. The seized farms have been badly managed and many are barely operating, so agricultural productivity has



Tsvangirai above, Mugabe in the middle and Mbeki on the right

dropped drastically.

Unemployment in the country has risen to 80 percent and as many as four million have fled to neighboring countries to survive or to escape Mugabe's thugs. About 3 million have settled in South Africa. Since independence, the income of the average Zimbabwean has dropped from \$1200 to less than \$500 per year.

Meanwhile, a Chinese ship arrived in a South African port carrying arms for Zimbabwe, raising alarm not only among Tsvangirai's supporters but also among Zimbabwe's neighbors. South African dock workers refused to unload the ship. But at last report it was on its way to Angola to deliver its shipment there for further transport to Zimbabwe.

On Zimbabwe's Independence Day, Mugabe painted the opposition as lackeys of the former colonial regime and puppets of the West. Against all evidence to the contrary the 84-year-old strongman celebrated his party as the champion of democracy and human rights. All the hardships, including an astronomical rate of inflation and the collapse of a once vibrant economy, were blamed on the "machinations" of Britain and the West. The government even charged that Tsvangirai was committing treason by conspiring with Britain to topple Mugabe's government. In 2002 Tsvangirai was imprisoned on the charge of treason



but was acquitted two years later.

The opposition, on the other hand, charges that the government has in effect set aside the constitution and is moving toward military rule.

Besides ruling the country like a virtual dictator over the last



little has been done to stop him. South African President Mbeki has consistently stood behind Mugabe, or at least he has refused to openly criticize his methods. As a result, Mbeki has come under strong pressure from the international community. Nevertheless, after

several years and running the economy into ruin, Mugabe now seems intent on stealing the election. Despite his strong-arm methods and his suppression of opposition,

visiting Mugabe two weeks after the election, he emerged from the talks to declare to the world that there is no crisis in Zimbabwe. Mbeki's critics accuse him of putting personal friendship before the welfare of the people of Zimbabwe and of South Africa. The influx of Zimbabwean refugees into South Africa has also created hardships and tensions there, as they compete with the locals for jobs and resort to crime to survive.

The UN and the Commonwealth have looked to the African Union and the South African Development Community to put pressure on Mugabe. But they have bowed to the principle of state sovereignty, refusing to interfere. Several years of "quiet diplomacy" have done little to alter Mugabe's course.

Roots of Asia's rice crisis

Tight supplies reflect population boom and neglect of farming

David Montero

BOHOL, Philippines — Gantallan Plorenio's farm is a paradox at the heart of Asia's growing rice crisis. The fields that get enough water have never been more productive, contributing to a five percent annual increase in rice production over the past two years.

"We have a lot of rice fields, but no irrigation," he says. "They're just sitting there."

As a regional rice crisis looms, threatening political instability and social unrest, the idle fields in Mr. Plorenio's village underscore a failure of policy and foresight repeated across the region: For decades, governments have been encouraging a boom in services and skyscrapers, but not the capacity to grow more rice. Financing in agriculture has stagnated, and fewer farmers are expected to produce more rice for exploding populations.

That neglect is one of the central causes of what some analysts call the "perfect storm" — including rising global oil prices, drought in Australia, and inclement weather — behind the rice crisis.

"It's a failure to recognize the importance of agriculture," says Duncan Macintosh, a spokesman for the International Rice Research Institute, based in Laguna, 40 miles from Manila, the capital of the Philippines. "Agriculture is becoming a very unfashionable industry."

Philippines at center of crisis

At the epicenter of the storm is the Philippines, the world's largest importer of rice. The island nation annually imports between 10 to 15 percent of its rice. But because global rice supplies are so tight — causing India, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam to restrict exports — the Philippines is having a hard time

fulfilling an import order of around one million tons.

The country is paying exorbitant prices for whatever rice it can get its hands on, driving up prices around the world to double last year's.

A 10 percent shortfall is expected for 2008, causing fears that food riots could erupt here as they have in countries such as Haiti, Egypt, Mexico, Burkina Faso, and Senegal.

Those are just concerns so far in the Philippines, but the government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo — like the governments of Haiti and Malaysia, among others — has been shaken by the growing crisis and faced with public calls for her ouster.

At the center of the storm lies a simple question: Why can't the Philippines, and other countries in Asia, produce enough rice to feed themselves?

See Rice crisis on page 2

News

Zimbabwe Christian students say Mugabe is as bad as Ian Smith

Harare (ENI) – The Student Christian Movement of Zimbabwe says there is no cause for celebration on the 28th anniversary of their country's independence, due to the collapse of national health and education systems and the brutal suppression of democracy by the government of President Robert Mugabe and his supporters.

"There is nothing to celebrate from the economic collapse that our nation is faced with now. There is nothing to celebrate from a basket case which Zimbabwe is now, when in 1980 Zimbabwe was the bread basket of Africa," said the students' statement released in Harare and Geneva on April 18, the anniversary of Zimbabwe's independence from Britain in 1980.

The students in their statement said Mugabe is no different to the white minority rulers who oppressed the rights of the Zimbabwean people during a bitter civil war that preceded independence.

From Geneva the general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Rev. Setri Nyomi, said, "It has been three weeks since the general elections



in Zimbabwe. It is mind boggling that the results have still not been released." In a letter to Rev. Prince Dibeela, general secretary of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, for Zimbabwe independence day, Nyomi, a Ghanaian, said, "This is a miscarriage of justice. Let us join our sisters and brothers in Zimbabwe in praying towards and working for justice to be done."

The student Christian group, which belongs to the Geneva-based World Student Christian Federation, in its statement noted the "active role we played during the liberation struggle" and they acknowledged the "significance of the date, April 18, 1980, as the day that Zimbabweans were liberated from colonial bondage".

But they said the governance and legitimacy crisis that Zimbabwe now faces "is far from what the people of Zimbabwe were celebrating in 1980" given that Mugabe's government refuses to announce the results of the elections held.

"There is nothing to celebrate from a man-made collapse in the education and

health delivery system," the student group stated. "There is nothing to celebrate from the deployment of military personnel, war veterans and youth militias to harass and brutalise civilians for voting for political leaders of their choice."

They added, "There is nothing to celebrate when the state manipulates and subverts the people's will by interfering in the announcement of the March 29th Presidential election results.... Above all, the nation can not celebrate the de facto military coup which Mugabe and his illegitimate service chiefs have imposed on Zimbabweans."

They said there is "no difference whatsoever between the conduct of [former Rhodesian prime minister] Ian Smith and Robert Mugabe in their oppression of Zimbabweans and in their insatiable appetite to go against the will of the people".

Smith headed a white minority regime in Rhodesia, as Zimbabwe was then called, that illegally declared independence from Britain in 1965 and it fought to stem a guerrilla war

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Rice crisis continued from page 1

Some reasons are beyond the direct control of the Philippines and other Asian archipelagos like Indonesia and Malaysia. Because their farmland is spread over thousands of miles and different islands, production, maintenance, and transportation make rice cultivation expensive and difficult.

"Thailand, the world's largest [rice] producer, has 9.82 million [hectares of rice fields]. The Philippines has 4 million hectares of productive farmland. And those 4 million hectares are spread over 7,000 miles," says Mr. Macintosh, adding that the Philippines also lacks a river delta, which by providing an easy and abundant water source, allows Asian countries like Vietnam, India, and Cambodia to produce higher rice harvests.

Other factors in the rice crisis are also beyond the Philippines' control. Rising oil prices have made rice more expensive to produce, by increasing fertilizer and transportation costs; pests in Vietnam, one of the world's largest producers, have wiped out as much as 200,000 tons; and the collapse of Australia's rice production due to drought has eaten away at global rice stocks.

But many other factors are directly a failure of foresight here, as in the rest of Asia. Although government spending on agriculture accelerated in the 1960s and '70s, pumped into irrigation systems, fertilizer, and rice breeding that spawned the Green Revolution, it slowed by half throughout the 1990s, according to one study. In 2002, the Philippines invested only \$0.46 for every \$100 of agricultural output, a level consistent with the rest of Asia, according to a study by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington. It means that Asia is a slacker when it comes to investment in agriculture compared with the rest of the developing world, which spent \$.053

for every \$100 of agricultural output, and the developed world, which spent more than \$2.0. The global average was around \$.070.

Instead, Asia is increasingly transforming farmland into office parks and suburbs. In the Philippines, half of irrigated land has been transformed into urban development in the past two decades. While this fuels new economic engines such as services and industry, it also undercuts resources needed to grow food.

Less water, land, labor for farming

"Manufacturing is demanding more and more water. Asia expects to grow one percent more rice every year – but they're supposed to do that on less water, less land, and less labor," says Macintosh.

Perhaps most important of all, there are simply more mouths to feed.

The population in the Philippines has grown by roughly two percent a year since 2000, one of the highest rates in Asia, leading to a corresponding leap in rice consumption. And across Asia, exploding middle classes with more money and bigger appetites are eating more rice – and more meat. Meat production requires huge amounts of water, labor, and grains to feed cattle, which in turn diverts resources away from rice production.

And yet, despite this obvious population growth, governments throughout Asia have assumed they could always import more and more food, according to analysts. Global stocks of rice, as with other grains, are at their lowest since 1976, depleted by a combination of population growth, less farmland, poor planning, and bad weather.

"There's been no incentive for rice self-sufficiency in the Philippines. It was always so easy to buy rice from your neighbor," says Angelito Banyo, director of PR Politik, a think tank in Manila.

The current crisis has exposed the fallacy

of thinking that supplies are in abundance, analysts say. It has also underscored a need for better coordination in Asia's rice trade.

Instead of coordinating policies to respond to a problem that is affecting all of Asia, India, China, and Cambodia, among others, have imposed strict export restrictions, leaving countries like Malaysia and the Philippines to scramble for any deals they can grab. That will only cause prices of rice to climb higher in the open market, analysts say.

Filipino officials said that the country is spearheading a regional meeting of 10 Asian countries to discuss the crisis, tentatively scheduled for this summer. Some analysts, however, don't expect much to come out of it.

"Rice is such a politically sensitive issue. Countries are not going to modify their rice prices to satisfy others. They're going to pursue prices that they believe are in their national interest," says Nicholas Minot, a researcher at IFPRI.

Reactions inside Asian countries have not helped, either. Hoarding has become a problem in India and Bangladesh, and caused such domestic price spirals in the Philippines that the government has threatened life imprisonment to prevent it.

Solutions, analysts warn, will not be immediate, but could take the form of food-for-work programs, targeted school feeding programs, and conditional cash transfers (where poor households are given cash assistance if they attend health clinics and keep their children in school).

"These types of programs are more effective in helping people adjust to the high prices than price controls or universal food subsidies," says Mr. Minot.

In the Philippines, Arroyo's short-term response has been to flood markets with highly subsidized rice, broker a quick deal with Vietnam for 2.2 million tons of rice, and

call for a halt on converting farmland into development space. Observers say they're all steps in the right direction. "The Philippines is a relatively positive situation, where the government is taking very productive steps," says Paul Risley, a spokesman for the World Food Program in Thailand.

Investment needed and on the way

But as the crisis mounts, observers agree that Asia needs a second Green Revolution, a movement launched in the 1960s that resulted in double rice yields through better irrigation and investments in rice technology. Money has to be put back into the science of feeding.

"In the long term, developing countries and the international community need to increase investment in agricultural research and development to develop new disease resistant, higher-yielding varieties," Minot adds.

The Philippines looks to be doing just that: Last week, President Arroyo announced a \$1 billion investment to improve rice production. The money would go toward seed production and training and loans to farmers, as well as updating irrigation and transport systems. "We must work harder to grow and breed what we need," President Arroyo said recently at a national food summit.

Small farms like Plorenio's in Bohol, meanwhile, show that investments can pay off. Four years ago, the local government introduced a plant-now pay-later scheme, allowing farmers to buy seeds from a bank, rather than planting their own. Production is way up over the past few years, Plorenio says.

A few weeks ago, Plorenio and other farmers in his town petitioned their local congressman for a \$12,000 loan to fund an irrigation system. If the loan comes through, he says, those rice fields won't be idle any longer.

David Montero is a correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

News

Pray for suffering North Korean Christians

RICHMOND, B.C. (MNN/WEA) – Though the International Day of Prayer for North Korea was Sunday, April 27, the need for such prayer is ongoing and urgent. The Day of Prayer called Christians worldwide to repentance and prayer for the nation of North Korea – a country which is the worst persecutor of Christians and one of the worst human-rights violating countries in the world today.

According to the World Evangelical Alliance, the purpose of the prayer day was to increase intercession by Christians around the world – individuals, ministries and churches – for the healing of North Korea.

The WEA requests that we continue to pray for North Koreans, and especially for North Koreans Christians.

* Pray for the captives to be set free.

There are an estimated 200,000 North Koreans, including women and children, currently being held in torture camps and enduring the most terrible cruelty. Many are Christians; most are imprisoned because they or their relatives are believed to be critical of the North Korean regime. Please intercede for the salvation of all prisoners and guards and for all torture camps to be permanently closed down.

* Please pray for the restoration of human rights to all North Koreans.

Pray specifically for handicapped persons, children, women, the elderly and the estimated 40 percent of the population that the North Korean government considers part of the "hostile class."

* Pray for those who are mercilessly persecuted because they or their relatives are believed to be critical of or are considered a blemish to the North Korean regime.

Millions have starved to death, and many continue to starve because the regime has prevented the hostile class from receiving aid; all Christian families are classified as hostile. Please pray for justice, equality, and freedom to be restored to the North Korean people.

Human-made disaster

North Korea has been devastated by famine. Millions have starved to death in the last 10 years and continue to starve. This is a human-made disaster with the government starving those in the "hostile class." International food aid has been diverted to the ruling party and the military.

* Please pray for sufficient food to reach those who are starving, breakthroughs for Christian aid workers to reach the poorest communities and for an end to the famine.

Hundreds of thousands of North Koreans have fled to China to escape persecution and starvation. If caught by the Chinese police, they are forcibly repatriated back to North Korea where they face imprisonment or execution. In order to survive, many of the refugees become victims of human trafficking and other horrific crimes.

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for majority rule being waged by sections of the majority black population.

The Christian students urged all Zimbabweans to continue with "the fight for genuine independence and freedom", and they urged the international local communities to remain united "in prayer and action to pressure Robert Mugabe to respect the will of the people".

The students cited the Book of Joel in the Bible, "His people should remember that, the Lord shall surely restore what the locust had eaten."

Many global Christian leaders have urged Zimbabwe to released the election results, and the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev Samuel Kobia in a letter to his United Nations counterpart Ban Ki-Moon on April 11 said, "We want to register our deep concern about the implications of the current political crisis which may be not only regional but also international."

* Please pray for the welfare of the North Korean refugees, that the Chinese government will stop forcing them to return to North Korea. Pray for refugees to find true peace and sanctuary.

The majority of people in North Korea have never heard the Word of God or heard the name of Jesus Christ. They are forced to worship the leader of the government, Kim Jong-Il, and his deceased father, Kim Il-Sung, as gods.

Christianity is seen as the greatest threat to the North Korean regime. In 2005, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom reported that "there are virtually no personal freedoms in North Korea and no protection for universal human rights."

* Please pray for the walls of idolatry and communism to collapse and for new and godly government; pray for God to raise up Christian leaders within North Korea. Pray also for freedom and spiritual awakening, that all North Korean people will know the Truth.

Back into the lion's den

North Korean Christians have routinely suffered torture and execution for their faith; they are widely regarded as the most persecuted believers in the world. Yet in the midst of such persecution, the North Korean believers display faithfulness and love for God that is extraordinary; some North Korean refugees after being converted in China decide to return to North Korea in order to spread the Gospel.

* Please pray for the North Korean Christians, that they would be greatly encouraged and strengthened; pray for their protection, provision, and guidance, and that they would be used in an even greater way for God's glory.

* Please pray for the dedicated Christian workers who have been laboring to bring about change for North Koreans through prayer and advocacy; pray for all of those working within the North Korea human rights movement including those who have escaped North Korea and now are working to bring freedom and human rights to their homeland; pray for those in China helping North Korean refugees, and for Christian NGOs that work inside North Korea. Please pray for their spiritual protection and empowerment as they wage battle against the darkness in North Korea, for a spirit of unity and partnership between them, for the Christian church throughout the world to join in united prayer for North Korea, and for God to send more workers into the harvest.

Awakening by the Spirit of Truth

After the Second World War, Korea was divided into two countries with the north coming under communist rule and the south under the influence of the West. Many families were divided.

* Pray that the walls of division and prejudice would crumble and that there would be healing, unification and forgiveness in Jesus' Name.

Before the installation of the Communist regime in 1945, North Korea was a center of great Christian revival; Pyongyang, the capitol of North Korea, was once even known as the "Jerusalem of the East."

* Pray for North Korea's coming revival to be even greater than the former, for God's life and presence to utterly fumigate North Korea, and that God would restore the nation back to himself.

* Pray for the fulfillment of 2 Chronicles 7:14 worldwide: that we, the global church and Body of

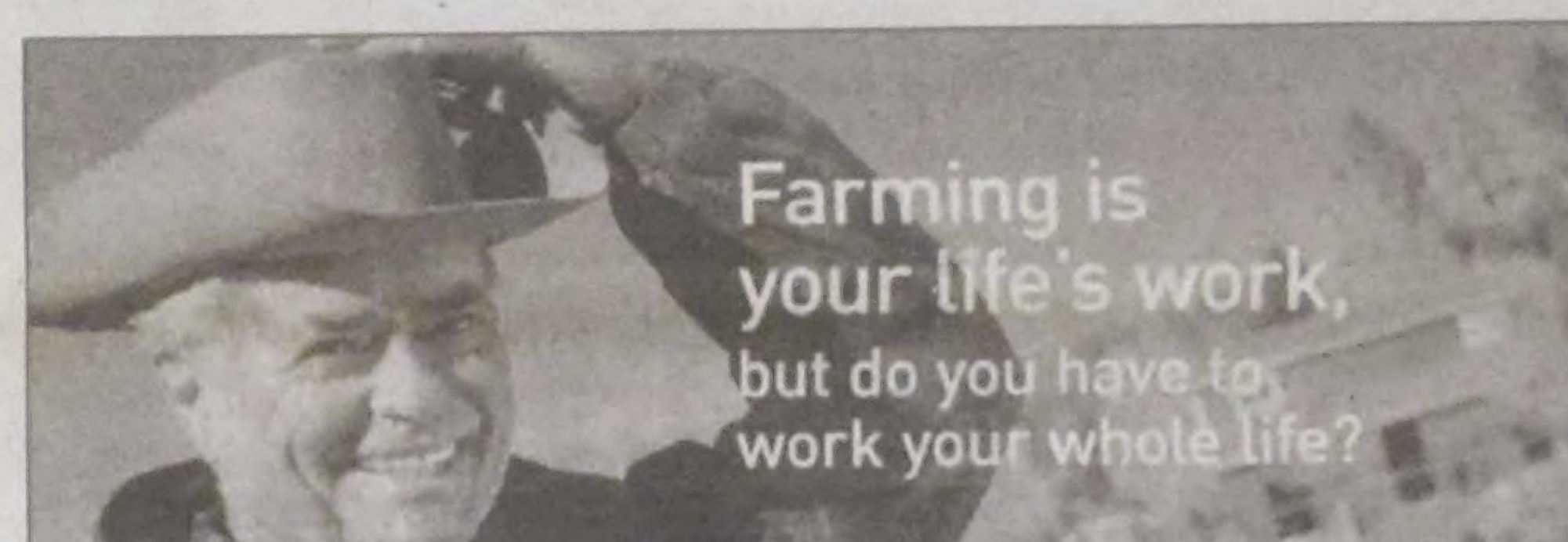


Fence dividing North and south Korea

Christ, would humble ourselves and seek God's face, and turn from our own sin so that God's healing flood will be released upon the nations.

* Pray that we would suffer with all of our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world and truly love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34), that the Body of Christ will be healed and made perfect in unity (John 17:23) to manifest God's glory to the nations.

* Pray that we would be awakened by the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13) to see the whiteness of the world harvest (John 4:35) and to understand God's love and urgency for the nations (Mark 16:15); that we would pray, give, and go for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 13:44-46) and Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).



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Editorial

Touch me, touch me not

Harry der Nederlanden

After Jesus' resurrection, as I pointed out in my reflections on the travelers to Emmaus (March 31), the feet of the disciples were very busy. They are seen running back and forth from the tomb to the other disciples. Although when we open the Bible, we read words, words, words, there is a lot of basic bodily exertion going on in these scenes. The disciples are physically working through what they are experiencing, not just by listening and talking, but also by walking and performing all the normal, everyday bodily movements we need to do to get through the day.

We are always very aware of one of the senses when we read Scripture – the sense of hearing. We are people of the book and of words. Jesus came proclaiming the good news of salvation and of the Kingdom. And the crowds came out to hear what he had to say, for he spoke as one who has authority. But there is a lot more than hearing happening in these post-resurrection stories.

When Jesus reveals himself to other disciples, we see two seemingly contradictory scenes played out. When Mary Magdalene reaches out to touch her beloved master, he shrinks back. "Do not hold me," he says, "for I have not yet returned to my father."

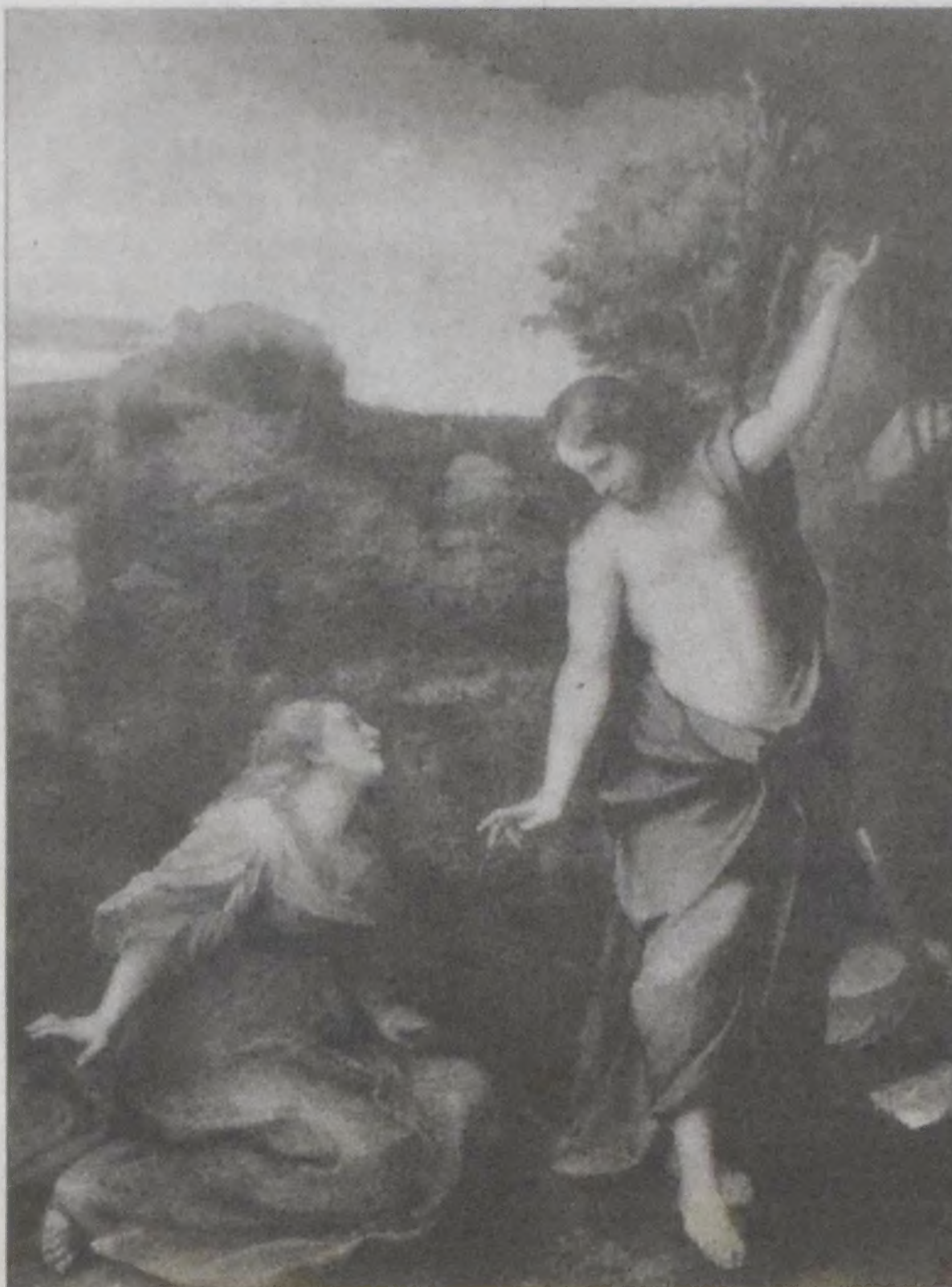
In the very next scene recorded by John, we see Thomas, who also feels the need to touch. "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Then Jesus appears, and he shows none of the reluctance to being touched that he showed to Mary. He says to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side."

In the first scene we see a hand reaching out only to be arrested, while in the second we see a hand being guided to touch and to feel.

Scripture is very chary when it comes to human contact with almighty God, especially in the Old Testament. Yahweh insists on a definite distance, even between him and his favorites. When David puts out his hand to stop the ark from falling, for example, he transgresses a boundary.

I suspect that this has a lot to do with Yahweh's self-differentiation from the gods of the heathen. They were



Jesus and Mary by Giovanni Francesca



Jesus and Thomas by Antonio Correggio

made with human hands of wood and stone. Yahweh, however, is not a family or tribal god to be formed in our image and manipulated. He is the God above all gods who rules all the nations and who is above all creation and all his creatures.

Even in those theophanies where God comes down to address his people, there is no face-to-faceness and certainly no touching. Yahweh appears as a burning bush and as a pillar of fire and a cloud in the central story of Israel's liberation. To Elijah he reveals himself as a gentle whisper or wind. All these appearances, however, do as much to hide God as to reveal him. They are no more than hints or tiny foretastes of what is to come in Israel's journey with this God who has chosen them as his partner, as his covenant people.

All this changes radically, of course, with the coming

of the Son of Man in the flesh. As a helpless infant, he is held and touched. We see Jesus mingling with the crowds, embracing children, reaching out his hand to heal the sick.

But even in the New testament it isn't that simple – as if we can simply reach out and touch him and be touched on our terms. Recall the story of the woman with a mysterious blood disease. She thinks to have free access to Jesus' healing power. She steals up on him, hoping to draw on that power without being noticed. But even though Jesus is being jostled by a crowd, he is very aware of her hand reaching out to touch him.

He may have walked among us as a fellow human being, but he was still Christ the Lord. He came to us not to be at our beck and command but to fulfill the mission that the Father sent him to perform.

When Peter and John leave the empty tomb to report to the others, Mary lingers. Not because she understands what has happened. She can only weep. Her questions addressed to the angels show her focused solely on personal, practical concerns. Where have they taken his body? She has grasped very little of what her master has been telling them about his mission. She believes he is dead.

When she turns, Jesus is standing there, but like the disciples traveling to Emmaus, she doesn't recognize him. No one more familiar to her than

Jesus, but like the others she must learn something about blindness. She must learn that her master is much more than a man, much more even than an extraordinary man.

Both Mary and Thomas wish to cling to a master who walks this earth beside us, accompanying us every step of the way. They pose the question asked by the church of all ages and thereby confirm Jesus' humanity and bodily resurrection.

Mary's questions to the angels are wholly personal ones limited to her relationship with him. No one was more familiar with Jesus. She certainly knew the man, the teacher, but she had yet to learn to know the risen Lord and his future.

Jesus is not just her personal friend and rabbi. He has come to earth and to her not to stay. He had to die, be raised from the dead and ascend into heaven to be her Lord as well as her rabbi. Only then could

he send his Spirit, not only to her, but to all succeeding generations of his followers to turn us into his body, his hands and feet.

Jesus' approaches Thomas very differently. As soon as he appears in the midst of the gathering, he focuses on Thomas. He is very direct, inviting Thomas to touch him and his wounds. And Thomas' response is immediate: "My Lord and my God!" Thomas seems to have sensed the implication of the resurrection; however, it is simply too incredible, too wonderful for him to embrace it so easily. But his acceptance of the evidence of his touch and of his eyes is joyful and whole-hearted.

So Jesus finds us – each in his own way. To one he says, "Don't hold me." To another he says, "Come here and touch me." But then we are enlisted in his mission on his terms. He is Lord and we must serve him in Spirit and in Truth.

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Opinion

Geert Wilders: provocateur or truth teller

...free speech is a fundamental right that is the foundation of modern society. Western governments and media outlets cannot allow themselves to be bullied into giving up this precious right due to threats of violence. (Peter Hoekstra, WSJ, March 26, 2008)

Harry Antonides

Geert Wilders has become famous, or infamous depending on your perspective, for using blunt language in warning that radical Islamists are bent on re-making Holland into a sharia-friendly country. In late March this issue came to a head when this Dutch parliamentarian decided to broadcast a 15-minute film, *Fitna*, in which he warns against the threat of a jihadist invasion of the free West.

Why is this stubborn Dutchman refusing to buckle under to the prevailing opinions among his peers? He certainly has not chosen the easy way. In fact, he has been subjected to an outbreak of threats and character assassination that has caused himself and his family a great deal of grief and hardship.

Most disturbingly, he has received many death threats, and for more than three years has lived under 24-hours a day police protection. He has been greatly constrained in his freedom of movement. And that in the freedom-loving and ultra liberal Holland! What's wrong with this picture?

Appeasement or Confrontation?

Wilders has long been a thorn in the side of those peace-loving and laid-back elites in Holland who believe that they are able to handle the problem of Muslim integration with dialogue and tolerance. They believe that appeasement is good, confrontation is bad. Hence they reject the advice of those who, like Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Geert Wilders, argue that the radicals who preach hatred and world domination in the name of Allah should be taken at their word – and confronted to their faces.

The appeasers are turning things around and accuse the likes of Wilders of needlessly provoking the rightful anger of Muslims. So we now have the topsy turvy world in which those who warn against capitulating to threats of violence are accused of being the cause of violence. It is an ironic confirmation of their warnings against radical Islam that Wilders now must live in fear of his life.

Things have gone so far that like the Anglican Archbishop Rowan Williams in Great Britain, the former Dutch minister of justice, Piet Hein Donner, said in 2006 that in future Holland may well have to accept sharia, that is, Islamic law. Wilders will have none of such surrenderist talk.

He has pointed out that he has no problem with Muslims who respect Dutch law and language and are willing to live in peace with their neighbours. But his criticism is aimed at those who on the basis of warlike passages of the Koran use violence and the threat of violence to bring about a radical



change in Holland and other western countries.

In a hard-hitting speech in the Dutch Parliament on March 20 Wilders castigated his colleagues for ignoring the presence of Muslims in Holland who promote an extremist version of Islam. He cited a number of verses from the Koran, which refer to Jews as pigs and monkeys and to non-Muslims as enemies that are bound for hell and must be subjugated or destroyed.

He pointed out that such verses violate Dutch law and should therefore be declared illegal. He said that Islam is not only a religion but also a political ideology that seeks to replace political pluralism with a one-party state. Wilders said: "Islam is an ideology without any respect for others; not for Christians, not for Jews, not for non-believers and not for apostates. Islam aims to dominate, subject, kill and wage war."

He concluded his speech with an appeal to Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende to reverse the influx of radical Muslims into the country, by among other things, closing their schools, stop the building of new mosques, ban burkas and the Koran and expel all criminal Muslims from the country. He told the Prime Minister: "Accept your responsibility! Stop Islamification!"

What really antagonized his detractors was his announced plan to issue a film showing the killings and destruction inflicted by Islamic terrorists. His colleagues, including members of the Dutch cabinet, warned that such a film would antagonize Muslims all over the world and might endanger Dutch society and its relations to the Muslim world, with potential damage to Holland's international trade.

The Dutch cabinet looked for ways to stop Wilders in his tracks, but could not find a legal way to do so. The Prime Minister pleaded with Wilders to cancel his film warning that Wilders would be responsible for any violence after the film's release. He said: "We believe it serves no purpose other than to offend." Dutch government officials even took up contact with some Muslim countries to do preemptive damage control by disavowing Wilders.

More threats

The leading Egyptian Sunni cleric Sheikh Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi (who has sanctioned jihad against American forces in Iraq and suicide bombings against Israeli citizens) has demanded that the Dutch government take action against Wilders and that protecting Wilders "will negatively affect Egyptian-Dutch relations."

The Grand Mufti of Syria has warned the European Parliament that the film may result in "violence and bloodshed" for which "Wilders

will be responsible." The U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has condemned the film, calling it "offensively anti-Islamic."

In Afghanistan, the very country where Dutch soldiers are risking their lives to liberate it from tyranny, Muslims have been burning Dutch flags and threatened to eject the Dutch. The Iranian head of the National Security and Foreign Policy Commission has promised widespread protest, and warned: "If Holland will allow the broadcast of this movie, the Iranian Parliament will request to reconsider our relationship with it." (Think of the oil supplies from the Middle East on which Holland and all Europe is dependent.)

It wasn't enough that many Western leaders ganged up with Muslim opponents of free speech to stop Wilders from airing his film. The prominent Dutch journalists Henk Hofland joined in condemning Wilders, but he also advised the Dutch government to withdraw state protection from Wilders, thus throwing him to the wolves. Hofland wrote: "Let him feel what it is like for those whose lives he endangers." Echoing the Prime Minister, he said that any murders committed in protest against Wilders' film would be the latter's responsibility.

Words fail to adequately describe the depth of cowardice and treachery implied in such craven advice. But it does indicate that the rot has gone deep in Dutch culture. This is not about whether Wilders is right about every point he makes. In fact, he is totally un-nuanced and sometimes over the top in his analysis and recommendations. For one thing, he does not appear to allow for the reality that there are many Muslims who are peace loving and civilized – though too few of them speak publicly.

Disturbing images

It is safe to assume that no film has ever aroused the outpouring of so much vitriol and dire warnings of violence even before it was shown. The showing itself had a rocky start.

Wilders had difficulty finding Web servers willing to take it on. Liveleak, a British Website, first began to post the film on March 27, then withdrew it the following day stating that its staff and their families had received threats of a very serious nature.

That, however, did not stop the film from becoming available. Others, including Google Video and YouTube, began posting it. And on March 30 Liveleak re-posted the film. They explained that first they had no choice in canceling because of death threats against their staff, but since security had been improved they now felt free to post the controversial film again. By now, millions have had a chance to see it.

It is indeed a disturbing film in that it provides graphic pictures of horrific mass murders, such as occurred on 9/11 which includes a clip of a telephone exchange with a doomed woman hopelessly trapped in the inferno of the collapsing buildings. Her agonizing pleas for help are unforgettable. There are similarly disturbing pictures of the attacks on Madrid and London, the murder of Theo Van Gogh, and the sound of a dying man whose throat is cut.

Other pictures show a burka-clad woman being shot in the head, the hanging of homosexuals, a three-year old girl who is taught that Jews are pigs and monkeys, and crowds shouting their agreement with various ranting imams pouring out their hatred against the wicked infidels and the coming destruction of Israel and America. Demonstrators (in England) are holding signs that say: "God bless Hitler," "Freedom go to Hell," and "Islam will dominate the world."

There is nothing in this film that does not reflect reality. Many, if not all the pictures, have been available on the Internet, some have appeared on the Al Jazeera channel. But perhaps most offensive to Islamic fanatics is the way violent Koranic verses are juxtaposed with horrific scenes of death and destruction while celebrating crowds

See Wilders on page 6

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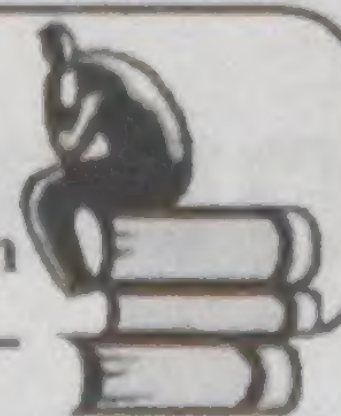
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Perspective

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman



Two passports, two tasks

In 1998 Nick Wolterstorff was speaking on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Kuyper's famous Stone Lectures at Princeton University. In his first lecture, entitled "Citizens, yet Aliens" he said something that has stuck with me ever since. He said we have *two passports* as Christians. This is an extremely significant thing to say, especially when you think of faithfully raising baptized children.

Let me explain. Wolterstorff was contrasting his view with the approach of those (Anabaptists, often) who say we are "resident aliens" of this world who belong to "another country"; we are singularly "citizens of heaven" (Phil. 3:20). Wolterstorff took issue with this one-sided focus, saying that we have "dual citizenship"—that we are citizens of Christ's kingdom but also members of the human race on this planet. The church has no Fatherland or Motherland, although we await a new "Homeland;" in the meantime we *sojourn* in a land with a people.

This country may even be Babylon, but we are still its citizens. Jeremiah said to the exiles in Babylon, "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city" (29:7). In other words, the antithesis between good and evil does not run between the church and our neighbourhoods, but across our whole culture and right through our own hearts. So love the land.

We are aliens in our culture as 1 Peter 1:1 says, but still also citizens of the world, which we confess belongs to God. Wolterstorff called this duality "paradoxical" and said that like church and state today, these two worlds have overlapping jurisdictions. We can't sing "this world is not my home" and abandon the land and political movements around us and still be faithful to God's call on our lives. As sojourners, we must care for our neighbours and participate in the affairs of the city.

One dream, two tasks

I want to bring this "two passports" perspective to bear on the topic of discipling children. Whether we consider Christian day schools, home schooling, or public education, if our children are "dual citizens" they have two tasks for their life. While some readers may resist this "duality", I suggest that it is already a part of every conversation we have on Christian education.

When you enter into a discussion on the topic of educating Christian children, you'll immediately hear two concerns: the first is that we want our children to grow in faith. We want them to be trained in the spiritual disciplines of Christian worship and service and develop a Christian imagination. The second passion that will surface will sound something like this: "I don't want my child to grow up sheltered in some bubble where they never learn to interact with the rich and diverse world that surrounds us." This second sentiment betrays the intuition that children ought not to be confined to Christian institutions but also need to also be participating in broader society. There is something good and right about children interacting with neighbourhood barbecues, city soccer leagues, inter-faith environmental groups and when the time is right, voting in the federal election.

Now are these two tasks best served by Christian

day schools, home schools, or public schools? I imagine that depends on the particular options available to us. A Christian school can potentially become a "compound" that shuts a student off from their neighbourhood. On the other hand, leaving a child to a public school to be a young evangelist, or simply as someone "open to diversity" can turn the child into a worldview consumer or a metaphysical nomad. Everything is dangerous.

The necessity of a village

I grew up in the Christian education system but I've worked in and with public universities now for over 15 years. Strong dual citizens are grown in both contexts. What I've noticed more recently is that some students nurtured in Christian schools run as far as they can from God as soon as their foot hits the soil of the public campus. If it's not "just a stage" of development they end up acknowledging only one citizenship—that of broader culture. Religion then becomes civically bound—a civil religion. Other students suspect that their public university is monolithically secular—if not evil—and while they walk the halls of the public institution daily, they embrace only one citizenship—that of a spiritualized heaven. Religion for them is an escape.

Dual citizenship is a hard, if not complex calling. As for me, when my children are old enough, we will probably send them to a Christian school and intentionally encourage family participation in our broader city from there. We do not see this as "limiting" our children's experience. For one, children need some consistency. Additionally, we desire to nurture in our children deep roots with an identifiable community. To use a retail metaphor, we want to support the family store rather than the big box complex, even if the choices are fewer.

However you pursue it, dual citizenship means being part of a counter-culture for the common good. It is not merely "participating" in culture, but engaging it as salt and light. So children need to be trained as "mis-fits" in a consumer culture in order to be good dual citizens.

In sum, there may be more to the expression "It takes a village to raise a child" than you first imagine. Usually we assume that means it takes *many people*—a whole village—to raise a child. But it can also mean that it takes a *village*—a community of people who share a worldview and way of life—to raise a child. Finally, it can also mean that it takes a *village* to raise a child, suggesting that some geo-political body of diverse citizenry is necessary as a context in which a child can grow, learn, and eventually serve. This can refer to the global village, which is wired into most homes and schools already.

In effect, every child born to a Christian family is a dual citizen, with dual passports. One citizenship comes with a baptismal certificate and the other with a birth certificate. The former nurtures the quality of participation that occurs in the latter, while the second citizenship provokes on-going re-interpretations of the first.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.



Wilders continued from page 5

scream their praises of Allah.

If this film shows reality, what is the problem? We know why the fanatics object and try to change the subject by demonizing Wilders and declaring a fatwa against him. But why would so many leaders in the West side with his detractors? Even Dutch churches have joined the chorus of condemnation.

A coalition of Protestant churches, the Council of Churches, and two Muslim contact organizations (the CMO and CGI) in the Netherlands, even before the film had been posted, expressed their "great concern" about it. They wrote that it has "aroused unnecessary conflict for which there is no reasonable occasion whatever. Expressions that incite fear for Islam and Muslims work destructively."

In their view it is "reprehensible if the sacred (elements) in our religions are ridiculed and our faith offended. We therefore forcefully reject it if the Koran and the Prophet Mohammed are treated with contempt and slandered."

A country in trouble

The mind boggles. What Wilders has done is to tell the truth about the hatred and suffering spread by the jihadists who are convinced that it is their religious duty to spread Islam by force and indoctrination. Do these Christians not know that many thousands, perhaps million of fellow Christians living in Muslim countries, are persecuted, forbidden to practice their faith, imprisoned, and killed in the name of Allah? Do they not realize that it is Muslims who ridicule and offend their Christian faith?

How heartbreaking it must be for such persecuted Christians to hear that Christian leaders in the free West side with their oppressors. At least one Dutch academic, the Arabist Hans Jansen, has registered his objection. He found the behaviour of the churches as well as the Christian Democratic party (CDA) "incomprehensibly indulgent and naïve." He asked: "Don't they even have an intern in the party who could look up what happened with the church under Islam?"

What hope is there for a country where its spiritual leaders betray their own flock by their refusal to face the ugly truth and then compound their betrayal by vilifying the one person who has the courage of his conviction to tell the truth—and to do so at great cost to his own peace of mind, even at the risk of his life?

The bitter controversy swirling around this film goes to the heart of what it means to be human and to live peaceably with one another. It is not really about the person of Geert Wilders. You may like him or not. He may be arrogant or humble, right or wrong about many things.

But he is right about the core message of this film: those who love death rather than life in the cause of Allah need to be exposed for the deadly menace they are. And when a member of the government is treated as a pariah and forced to lead the life of a fugitive in his own country for simply speaking the truth, such a country is in very serious trouble.

This story is filled with numerous sad ironies and missed opportunities. Here is one more: When non-Muslims lose their critical faculties and their courage, they also make life more difficult for those Muslims who reject the jihadists and want to reform Islam from within. One such person is a Muslim member of the Dutch cabinet, Ahmed Aboutaleb, who in a recent television interview advised his fellow Muslims:

Muslims must think about the fear generated by their religion. The majority [of Muslims] remains silent and that is not good. We have chosen for the Netherlands, precisely because of the freedom here. This has to be said. I miss the [Muslim] voice that distances itself from extremism.

Let's hope that the good sense of this Muslim will still win the day over the cowardice of the political and spiritual leadership of this troubled country.

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Stewardship



Bella

Metanoia Productions;
directed by Alejandro
Gomez Monteverde,
produced by Leo
Severino and Eduardo
Verastegui

Reviewed by Sonya
VanderVeen Feddema

Bella, winner of the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival's People's Choice Award, was released in theaters in major Canadian cities early in April this year. The first movie

created by Metanoia Productions, Bella gives theatergoers a welcome change from Hollywood's common fare. That's because, according to Producer Leo Severino, the production company's mandate is to create "films that are timeless and that engage and inspire people. Films that have the capacity to change people's hearts and minds" (www.LifeSiteNews.com). Producers of films with that vision in mind might be tempted to reduce complex life issues to simplistic equations and solutions. Not so with Bella.

A decidedly pro-life movie, Bella neither sermonizes nor moralizes as it shows how the lives of two restaurant co-workers, Jose (Eduardo Verastegui) and Nina (Tammy Blanchard), are irrevocably intertwined and changed when Nina becomes pregnant by a man she no longer has a relationship with. Broke, alone, and disliking children, Nina has decided to abort the baby.

Jose's compassion for Nina is heightened by a self-inflicted tragedy and fall from grace, as well as potential fame and wealth, that he had experienced years earlier. That tragedy had irreversibly changed his life and taught him the meaning and complexity of loss and grief. Though Jose had tried determinedly to redeem himself from his past mistake, forgiveness was withheld by the only person who could grant it. And so he continued to bear the crushing weight of the past.

The film artfully develops the opposing themes of chaos and community in various scenes where food is prepared or consumed. As Jose and Nina leave the restaurant during a busy shift and deal with the emotional stress caused by the unwanted pregnancy, confusion and turmoil erupt at the restaurant as the preparation and delivery of food to clients become a manager's nightmare. On the other hand, as Jose and Nina find a safe haven and a measure of peace at his parents' table, though it is temporary, the preparation and consumption of food are portrayed as a celebration, both delightful and welcoming.

The film also subtly fleshes out the contrasting themes of blindness and insight. In a particularly moving scene, Nina and Jose meet a blind man who asks them to describe what they see around them. He revels in Nina's description of New York's bustling streets. As Nina and Jose walk away from the blind man, viewers catch a fleeting glimpse of the cardboard sign resting on the street by him, boldly declaring, "God Closed My Eyes Now I Can See." Viewers are gently coaxed to look beyond the surface of things to a deeper truth – the Truth – working behind events. In the light of Nina's predicament, one might begin to wonder: Who are the blind ones? Are they the ones who refuse to accept the humanity of the unborn child in the womb? And who are those who truly see what is real? Are they the ones who acknowledge the right to life for the unborn child?

It is with new eyes and a different way of seeing reality that Jose undertakes a redemptive, sacrificial act that has life-altering consequences for Nina and himself, and thus both are restored to wholeness.

Viewers with an ear for lyrics will begin to anticipate a hopeful solution to a potentially tragic tale as background lyrics softly and prayerfully plead, "I have heard your voice. I long to lie in the arms of faith . . . be closer unto thee . . . consecrate me, Lord, in thy service by the power of grace divine . . . my will be lost in thine."

Though Bella's message is pro-life, it is not a movie for young children due to one especially graphic scene. However, pre-teens, teens, and adults will discover in this thought-provoking movie rich metaphorical imagery, a compelling story, and excellent performances by both Verastegui and Blanchard.



Leo Severino, producer and co-writer of BELLA.
See interview on page 24.

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

Day 5 – Creatures

The fifth in the series "Seven reflections based on the days of creation"

On the fifth day of creation God said: "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky...and God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase upon the earth.'" (Gen. 1:20, 21b, 22)

Not too long ago I watched a CBC Special on the controversy sparked by the return of the ivory billed woodpecker. The story goes that someone in Arkansas claims to have heard and seen one these supposedly extinct creatures – after over 50 years of no reported sightings. So far the sighting has not been confirmed although there is a lot of effort going into checking it out.

The ivory billed woodpecker is not the only casualty of today's world. The World Wildlife Fund says there are many more species that are at risk today. Here's an opening paragraph from their Canada website:

Across Canada, habitat loss, pollution, foreign invaders, climate change, and unsustainable harvesting have pushed over 500 species dangerously close to extinction. Species of every description, from lichens to leatherback turtles, whooping cranes to wood bison are at risk.

That's bad news for our native land and a stinging indictment of our stewardship. An example of where there was once abundance – the large fish stocks off the East Coast; over fishing by competing nations has killed an industry that once flourished from the wealth of the Grand Banks. It would have been worse if our government had not stepped in. Left unchecked we are heading into a downward spiral as more species are lost and the tremendous variety and beauty of God's creation is diminished.

There are positive signs, however, that 'knowledge' has led to "action" in saving species from extinction. On the same website, the World Wildlife Fund reports that: "the peregrine falcon and the sea otter have made a comeback". We also know that a concerted effort in Africa to control the poaching of elephants for their ivory tusks has resulted in the herds rebounding.

Every one of the many species of fish and birds are precious to the creator who made them. God said it was good. Yet mankind's stewardship has made a negative impact on God's creation. I invite and challenge you to learn more and to act to protect our ocean habitats and the habitats of the many different species of birds. Visit the World Wildlife Fund site [<http://www.wwf.ca/>] on your own (or with your grandchild if you are not internet-savvy).

Listen to the birds outside your window now that spring has arrived. How beautiful they are! Take a moment to revel in the awesome creative hand of God, the God who made these beautiful creatures and said they were good. Good – let's encourage and practice a stewardship that will keep it that way!

Stewardly tip: Ask more. Become more aware of where your food is coming from.

Were the animals that were slaughtered to provide you with nourishing food cared for in a manner that is humane and respects the welfare of the creatures that God made? Often, in an effort to provide 'cheap' food, farmers are tempted to cut corners to save costs: leading to overcrowding, minimal ventilation, dirty pens and limited freedom of movement. It often costs more to produce healthy and safe food in an environment that is conducive to a happy animal! Ask – and then be willing to reward good stewardship!

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Day 6 – Humankind

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Church

Russia: doors to religious freedom are closing

Anneta Vyssotskaia

MOSCOW – After many years of persecution of Christianity and all other religions during the Soviet era, Russia experienced a great spiritual revival in the 1990s. Hundreds of thousands of Russian people turned to God. However, the spiritual revival was followed by a spiritual alienation in Russian society generally and a mistrust of religious organizations and workers. To a great extent this was a result of many negative articles in mass-media about “sects,” as well as the government’s policy to support the “four traditional religions”: the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (MP ROC), Islam, Buddhism and Judaism. The spiritual revival continued but on a much smaller scale, mainly among the most neglected groups in Russian society: drug addicts, prisoners and street people.

Children and teenagers were another large group who remained open to the gospel. During Perestroika in Russia, the Communist regime collapsed and society went through the most dramatic period of social, political and economic change. The doors opened for preaching the gospel in all children’s educational and medical institutions: schools, summer camps, hospitals and orphanages.

Missionaries and teachers of the gospel were actually invited to come and tell children about God. Many children and teenagers became believers even before their parents did; they were very open to learning from the word of God and became committed members of the churches. Multitudes of elderly people who were coming to the churches during Perestroika, often to get some humanitarian aid, were gradually replaced by young people. The traditional old hymns were complemented by more contemporary worship and Christian young people full of energy and optimism enthusiastically hastened to do good works and invite their non-Christian friends to the churches. These children became young adults and are now the main hope and missionary force of the Church.

Russian Orthodox oppose Protestants

The situation has changed. The doors that were once open are now closed and most churches are not allowed to access children’s institutions, with the exception of the MP ROC churches. This policy is unofficially but strongly supported by the Russian government who want to see stability and solidarity in society and look to the MP ROC as a means of ensuring this. With the obvious lessening of spiritual hunger in society, MP ROC looks for new ways to strengthen their position in the Russian generations to come.

MP ROC has sought “to win the children’s souls” by its efforts in promoting “Foundations of Russian Orthodox Culture” as a compulsory school subject. This battle has gone on for almost 10 years now and is not finished yet. Those opposing this initiative are concerned it would lead to clericalizing the educational system as well as the division of children by their religion and nationality. In extreme cases it would cause even the persecution of those whom MP ROC considers to be “sectarians,” including all Protestants. In September last year a seven-year-old son of a Protestant pastor in Voronezhskaya region was severely beaten by his classmates on his first day at school for being a non-Orthodox, after a prayer service led by a Russian Orthodox priest.

In this “battle for the children’s souls” some priests and activists of the MP ROC are trying to stop Protestant churches’ ministry to children, even in Sunday schools. In March this year a United Methodist church in Smolensk was dissolved by a court order because of its “educational activities without a licence” – the church had a Sunday school attended by four children of church members. This happened after a complaint from the MP ROC Bishop of Smolensk, which resulted in the church being checked by various authorities, including the Organised Crime Department of Police. A leading Russian Christian lawyer, Vladimir Ryakhovsky, from the Slavic Centre for Law and Justice expressed an opinion that the court liquidation of the Methodist church will increase the threat to other religious education. Almost all the churches in Russia have Sunday schools without ever needing an educational licence, but this can now be used as a reason to liquidate them.

**PLEASE PRAY**

- * Thanking God for the whole generation of committed Christians in Russia who as children and teenagers grew up to become the main missionary force of the church.
- * For the next generation of the church in Russia, that the children may grow in faith and receive instruction in the word of God to become the future salt and light of Russia.
- * For the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church to realize the importance of the unity of the Christian churches in Russia, that mutual respect, partnership and co-operation may grow among them all.

CRC-sponsored Bible translation released

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Christian Reformed Church missionaries have been busy in recent months distributing copies of a newly translated version of the New Testament to remote villages in the West African country of Guinea. Written in Pular, the dialect of the Fulbe people, the New Testament translation was begun under the auspices of the CRC and took nearly 20 years to complete.

“Having the New Testament available in Pular is very significant. It is important to the life of the church,” says Joyce Campbell, who works with her husband, David, in the city of Dalaba as a church planter for Christian Reformed World Missions.

In Guinea the New Testament had mainly been available in French, a language that many of the people connect to colonial times and not with the language and heritage of their country, says Campbell. “People really appreciate the chance to read it in their own language.”

Pular and Greek

Most of the people in Guinea are Muslim and read the Quran, which was written in Arabic 1300 years ago. As a result, they have a deep appreciation for written scriptures, especially those whose roots can be traced back to their original source.

In the case of the Pular New Testament, the material is presented in Pular, with an accompanying column of Greek, the original language of the Bible, says Campbell.

Before she and her husband left Guinea to return to the United States for a visit in December, they had a chance to distribute copies of the New Testament to members of their small church. Meanwhile, David Campbell is recording the Pular Scripture in a recording studio and will make it available on tape.

About 18 years ago, the CRC began the translation process and then asked the United Bible Societies to help with the project. In March, a special ceremony took place in Guinea to dedicate the New Testament translation. “The entire project was a partnership that required a huge investment, and we pray for huge dividends,” says John Span, a CRWM missionary in Guinea.

A prayer card published by CRWM sketches the story of the trek by missionaries to distribute the translated Scripture. With a headline of “The Pular New Testament has arrived in Guinea!” the sketch describes how a hot, dry wind from the Sahara blew head-on against the trekkers as they traveled. “Their heavy packs have two very precious items that are quite different but have a lot in common: their drinking water and the reason for their trek: the newly released New Testament in the Pular language.”

Bringing Living Water

They have come, says the prayer card, “to bring Living Water to a dry and weary land. The long, exhausting trip through a dozen remote villages inaccessible by vehicles is worth it when the missionaries see the joy on the people’s faces as they read the Word of God in their own mother tongue for the first time in their lives.”

Of the visit to one village, he wrote: “After chatting a long time, drinking some oranges, and eating breakfast, we presented the leadership with some of the Scripture we had brought. They were thrilled with what they saw and asked if we had any extras along to sell.”

The work of translating is not complete, however. Work continues on the translation of the Old Testament. Translators are also converting the New Testament from the Latin alphabet to the Arabic alphabet, since many Fulbe only read Arabic letters.

**Religious liberty organizations call for global prayer for China**

ZURICH (RLP) – In a historic move, key organizations that work with the persecuted church around the world have launched a global campaign calling for prayer for China. In what is called “The Zurich Statement,” the Religious Liberty Partnership, with member organizations that include Open Doors International, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, the Voice of the Martyrs (Canada), and the Religious Liberty Commission of World Evangelical Alliance, have called the worldwide Christian community to pray for China during this Summer Olympics year.

The Zurich Statement acknowledges some progress made in China over the past few decades and raises the hope that this will translate into the removal of remaining obstacles to the full expression of faith and an end to serious violations of religious freedom. In addition, the statement recognizes the potential of the Chinese nation as a significant political and economic force for the furtherance of regional and global peace.

“The call for prayer is rooted in the fact that the RLP felt it was time to acknowledge some progress in China’s attitude toward religious liberty and also the part Christians play at all levels of Chinese

society,” stated Mervyn Thomas, CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UK, and Chairman of the RLP leadership team. “There is still a very long way to go and religious freedom is something very alien to many Christians in China. However Christians all over the world have been praying for their Chinese family for many years and I believe we are beginning to see the impact of those prayers today.”

“What a change we have seen in the nearly 30 years since my first visit to China,” said Johan Compajen of Open Doors International in the Netherlands and a member of the RLP leadership team. “In spite of many obstacles, the Church in China has multiplied. What seemed impossible in the past has happened because around the world we joined the Chinese Christians in prayer and our Chinese brothers and sisters have been willing to pay the price for following Jesus. If we continue to pray, we may be surprised by what God will do in the coming 30 years.”

The Religious Liberty Partnership is a collaborative effort of Christian organizations focused on religious liberty. The partnership seeks to more intentionally work together in addressing advocacy and in raising the awareness of religious persecution globally.

Church

In wake of visit, Pope Benedict impresses Catholics and Protestants alike

Marian Van Til

NEW YORK —

When Pope Benedict XVI came to the U.S. for his recent five-day visit, he was little known by North Americans. If there was an earlier impression at all, the secular press had portrayed a negative one: as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger he had been tagged “God’s rottweiler” for his presumed hard-line and tenacious “enforcement” of conservative Catholic doctrine.

That perception has changed dramatically. Benedict came across as a humble, shy man of warmth and compassion, a sensitive and comforting pastor. Yet his sharp intellectual mind and theological insight were not left in Rome. But it was the Pope’s insistence on the need for his Catholic flock — and indeed, for everyone — to cultivate an “intimate relationship with Jesus,” and his frequent expression of biblical principles emphasized by evangelical Protestants that likely surprised some of those Protestants.

The theme of Benedict’s trip, “Christ, Our Hope,” explained the pontiff’s motivation: “Christ is the foundation of our hope: for peace, for justice and for the freedom that flows from God’s law, fulfilled in his commandment to love one another.”

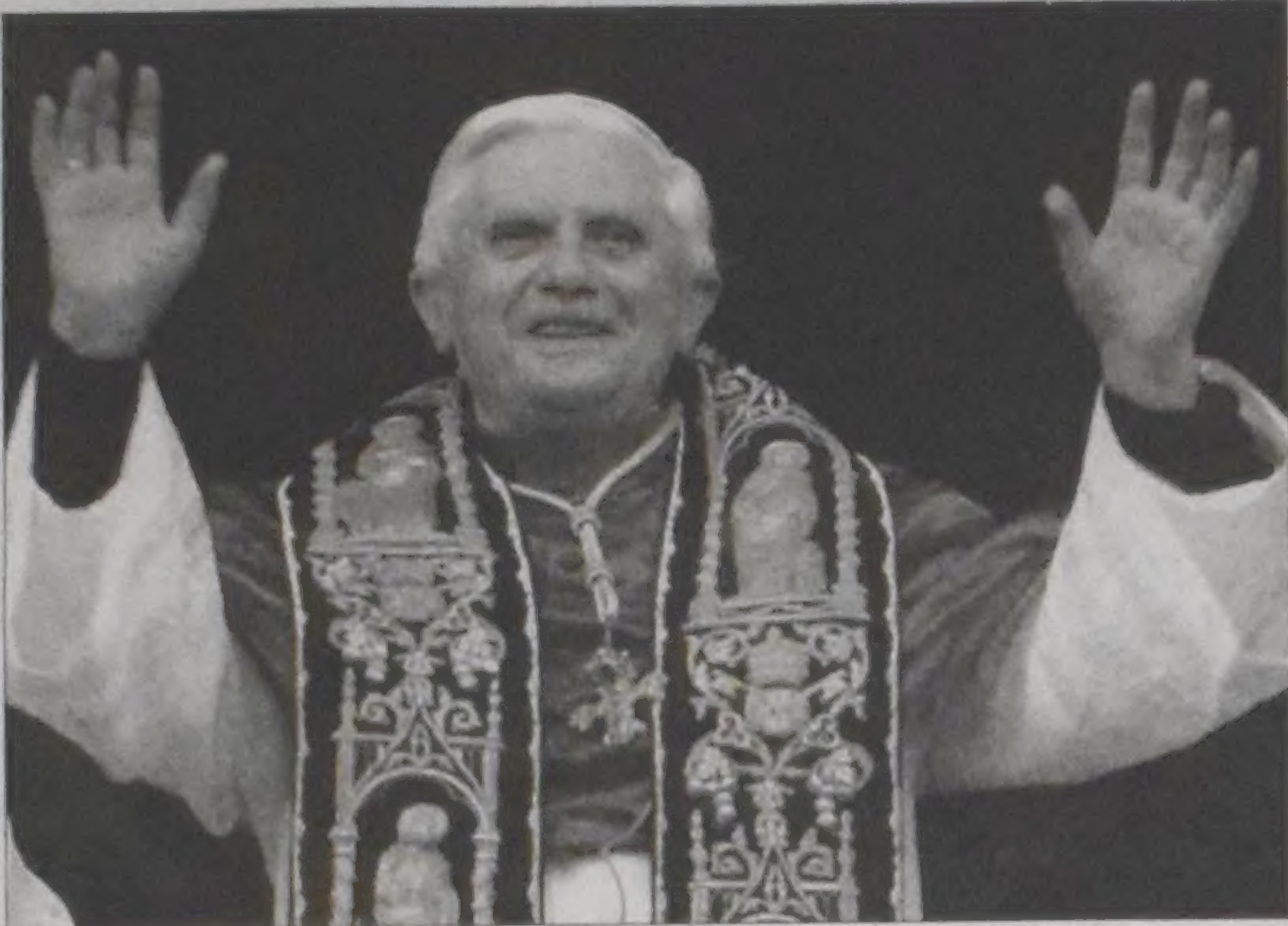
Benedict was particularly praised for the strong and obviously heartfelt way he acknowledged the pain of those who suffered abuse at the hands of church leaders, and for his pledge to further weed priest-pedophiles out of the church.

No dumbed-down message

The former Cardinal Ratzinger is an intellectual and a scholar, so it is not surprising that his sermons and talks did not “dumb down” the truths he wanted his listeners to think about. Jeff Sullivan, a New York lawyer present at one of the venues said, “I think that it is actually helpful and inspirational to hear a message that you have to *listen* to. Nobody is going to be won over by superficial, charismatic, easy accessibility with Pope Benedict because he’s an intellectual.”

Sullivan continued, “And yet when you hear his message, what you see is that the message, as is often the case with the truth, while it may not be presented in the most shiny way, is even more convincing when you listen to it, although you have to process it through the filter of listening to a German intellectual.”

A seminarian from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, concurred. John Paul Shimek said, “Looking at the whole trip, I’ve been very impressed by the depth of his messages. When Benedict talked with Catholic seminarians and young people, Shimek felt “Christ Our Hope” was



tangible. “He plugged into so many of the contemporary problems that we are facing, it was just something that really inspired me because his message was so relevant, it was contemporary, it was what we needed to hear.”

Today’s truth crisis rooted in faith crisis

The most important point the Pope made to Catholic university presidents is that education is not a matter of numbers but of conviction. He addressed those “who think that academic freedom means the freedom to question everything, but he said freedom cannot contradict the truth or else it contradicts the heart of the church. Universities need to be at that heart.”

A number of Catholic colleges and universities have abandoned in virtually everything but name their missions as Christian institutions. So before the Pope spoke there were some in the room speculating whether they were going to get rebuked or not, said one of those present.

The Pope asked the university leaders to reflect on how their institutions “contribute to the good of society through the church’s primary mission of evangelization.” He stressed, “All the church’s activities stem from her awareness that she is the bearer of a message which has its origin in God himself. The one who seeks the truth becomes the one who lives by faith.”

Reluctance to give self to God

The Christian identity of Catholic higher education is “a question of conviction: Do we really believe that only in the mystery of the Word made flesh does the mystery of man truly become clear? Are we ready to commit our entire self — intellect and will, mind and heart — to God? Do we accept the truth Christ reveals? Is the faith tangible in our universities and schools? Is it given fervent expression liturgically, sacramentally, through prayer, acts of charity, a concern for justice, and respect for God’s creation? Only in this way do we really bear witness to the meaning of who we are and what we uphold.”

“From this perspective one can recognize that the contemporary crisis of truth is rooted in a crisis of faith,” Benedict XVI concluded.

“Only through faith can we freely give our assent to God’s testimony and acknowledge him as the transcendent guarantor of the truth he reveals.”

But giving oneself fully to God seems difficult to many people today, Benedict acknowledged. People are reluctant to entrust themselves to God, he said. “It is a complex phenomenon and one which I ponder continually. While we have sought diligently to engage the intellect of our young, perhaps we have neglected the will. Subsequently we observe, with distress, the notion of freedom being distorted. Freedom is not an opting out. It is an opting in — a participation in Being itself. Hence authentic freedom can never be attained by turning away from God. Such a choice would ultimately disregard the very truth we need in order to understand ourselves.”

Freedom requires responsibility

In a different way the Benedict also talked about freedom and restraint to his international audience at the United Nations. “In the context of international relations it is necessary to recognize the higher role played by rules and structures that are intrinsically ordered to promote the common good, and therefore to safeguard human freedom. These regulations do not limit freedom. On the contrary, they promote it when they prohibit behavior and actions which work against the common good, curb its effective exercise and hence compromise the dignity of every human person.” Benedict also warned against divorcing “rights” from their ethical foundation.

Later Benedict reminded Americans that the kind of freedom they experience is not just a gift, but is also “a summons to personal responsibility.” He expressed gratitude that in their “land of religious liberty Catholics found freedom not only to practice their faith, but also to participate fully in civic life, bringing their deepest moral convictions to the public square and cooperating with their neighbors in shaping a vibrant, democratic society. (It might be noted that today, five of the nine U.S. Supreme Court justices are Catholics.)

Pope knows Calvin’s Institutes

Benedict also held an inter-denominational prayer meeting in Washington to which many Protestant leaders were invited — including Rev. Jerry Dykstra, executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. In recent years, the CRC and the Roman Catholic Church have been in dialogue over how the two denominations view the Lord’s Supper. As a result of these discussions, “we have made excellent progress” in opening lines of communication between the churches,” Dykstra said before he left for Washington.

He was especially honored to be part of the papal prayer service, he told Chris Meehan of CRC Communications, since “in a time when the world is splintered into so many segments, we will have the opportunity

to demonstrate the gospel of Christ. Jesus prayed for unity, and we need to take every opportunity to demonstrate that unity.”

Benedict has gotten high marks from some evangelical leaders for his knowledge and understanding of non-Catholic Christendom. David Wells, a theologian at Gordon Conwell Seminary near Boston, met the Pope when he was Cardinal Ratzinger. During a coffee break, the cardinal picked up on a point Wells had made by launching into a detailed discussion of Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. “I was very impressed by the wide range of his knowledge, his lucidity and the grasp of the issues, both historical and contemporary,” Wells says.

Perhaps it was some of Calvin’s influence — or simply his constant study of the Bible — that made Benedict tell his flock, “Any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted. Only when their faith permeates every aspect of their lives do Christians become truly open to the transforming power of the Gospel.”

Things in common

Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, notes, “We have solidarity with the Catholic church in that we are pro-life, value traditional families, and uphold the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and the substitutionary atonement. In a culture where these beliefs are constantly challenged, we are grateful for all who strongly stand for shared beliefs.”

Peter Giersch, president of the National Bible Association and a Catholic, said he believes the warming of relations between evangelicals and Catholics has less to do with shared enemies than with a change he sees occurring within both Christian traditions.

“In the last half of the 20th century there was very much an either/or choice between Catholicism and evangelicalism,” said Giersch. “To use the stereotypes, Catholics were all ritual and no Bible, and the evangelicals were all contemporary worship and no history. It was a false choice even then, but it feels like one is no longer forced to choose. I see Catholics reading the Bible much more and bringing contemporary tools to their faith, while I also see evangelicals reading the church fathers and coming awfully close to what you might call liturgy in their worship. There’s been a real cross-pollination.”

Benedict’s emphasis on seven-day-a-week faith, on Scripture and on prayer resonated with evangelical and Reformed Protestants. Benedict’s admonition to Catholic youth is a summation of his “Christ Our Hope” theme, and something every Christian needs to hear:

“May you step forward and take up the responsibility which your faith in Christ sets before you! May you find the courage to proclaim Christ, ‘the same, yesterday, and today and for ever,’ and the unchanging truths which have their foundation in him.”

Life

My life of crime

On the nicest spring evening we've had so far, I had packed too much activity into too little time. Now I hurried out the door and checked my watch. Bible study started in ten minutes. It takes seventeen to get to the church.

Have you ever noticed that when you're late, you always end up behind the only law-abiding driver in the province? Thankfully Pokey Joe turned off at the first side road. Next there was a tractor and manure spreader straddling the shoulder and half of my lane. Not someone I wanted to follow too closely. Once around the farmer I headed for the stoplight at the intersection known as Teviotdale. It was red. Of course.

While I waited for the light to change, a transport truck rounded the corner ahead of me and slowly worked its way up through the many gears. The light turned green and within seconds I was on his tail. I peaked around the giant in my way, making sure it was clear to pass and pulled out, pedal to the metal, as they say, wanting to get around this obstacle as quickly as I could. The Jeep was sailing at over 100 kilometres per hour as I pulled back into my own lane.

That's when I noticed the cruiser – the one with the radar gun on the dash – parked on the opposite shoulder of the road. The officer inside appeared to be looking at something else in his car. I braked to drop my vehicle back down to somewhere near the speed limit. Maybe my bad behaviour had escaped his attention? Nope. In the rear view mirror I saw his roof lights come on and he made a swift U-turn. All that stood between me and justice was the transport truck I had just passed. The truck driver probably found this whole episode quite amusing.

I lowered my speed another ten kilometres, turned off the radio and wondered if the ownership and proof of insurance were still in the glove compartment. At least the photo on my current licence isn't too embarrassing. My hands started to sweat. I glanced in the mirror, fully expecting to see the cruiser pass the tractor trailer and pull me over.

What is the appropriate prayer at such a time? I couldn't very well ask the Lord to spare me a traffic ticket I had so clearly earned for myself. Me – the one who never speeds, the one who constantly peers over Jack's shoulder to make sure he doesn't take wings and fly. How did I get into this mess? I moaned, thinking how this one lousy ticket would impact my motorbike insurance for the next three years.

The transport pulled into a factory yard, just as we entered a 50 zone. I dropped my speed to 49 ½ and thought of what I might say to the policeman. Should I mention that I'm late for my Bible study group? That probably wouldn't be such a good witness. Maybe if I explained that I zoomed past the truck to get back into my own lane because he was still gearing up and I didn't have time to stay behind him, especially after I had already been delayed by Pokeymon and the farmer with the manure spreader.

No. This was going from bad to worse. I'd sound like some kind of maniac speed-demon.

I drummed my fingers on the wheel and wondered why he hadn't yet turned on the lights

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

and siren. I could almost feel his icy stare boring holes into the back of my guilty head. He looked young. Maybe he would see me and think of his mom. I gulped. What if he had issues with his mom? We re-entered the 80 zone and I eased up to 79 ¾. Still no roof lights.

Okay. The only thing left to do was to accept the punishment I had coming. I would admit my offence and live with the consequences. The cop behind me had to be chuckling to himself, watching me sit up ramrod straight, hands on the wheel at "ten and two," checking my mirrors at eight second intervals, like some poster girl for driver's ed. This must be how the mouse feels just before the cat pounces. Maybe he would follow me right into the church parking lot and issue my citation with all my Bible study buddies looking on.

In the oncoming lane a red Ford pick-up truck streaked past. All at once my pursuer dropped back. The lights went on and he swung the cruiser around, chasing after the Ford. The last I saw of him was the flashing lights disappearing into the sunset behind me.

Relief washed over me as I turned the corner and crept up to 80 ½ km/h. The rationalizing began: He probably didn't get a clock on me when I had passed the transport. Maybe he saw that I was obviously repentant and decided to give me another chance. Maybe he had bigger fish to fry. Whatever, I had deserved justice and been shown mercy. Grateful for the second chance, I reminded myself that police officers and speed limits are there to protect us and should be respected at all times, not just when I'm about to get busted. I pulled into the parking lot giggling nervously, eager to tell my friends about the escapade.

On the way home I found myself tempted to run a yellow light, then struggling not to speed. The roads were good, the hour was late and I just wanted to get home. I get passed far more often than I pass others. Everybody speeds. I never go more than ten ks over the limit.

Suddenly our Bible discussion came to mind. We had talked about that Pharisee who stood loud and proud, thanking God for making him so much more righteous than the tax collector next to him. Ouch. If I *never* speed, why was I sweating bullets on my way to church that night? Does it really take a cruiser on my tail to keep me in line? Total depravity had once again reared its ugly head. It's a painfully close analogy to my Christian walk – I know the rules of the road, I'm aware of the posted limits, but too many times, when I think no one's looking, I bend the rules or ignore them altogether, and then self-righteously justify my actions, as if perhaps God had been distracted and not noticed my bad behaviour.

With that thought I backed off the gas pedal. After all, a person who truly appreciates grace lives a life of gratitude. So if you end up behind some woman in a Jeep putt-puttin' along when you're in a hurry to get somewhere, be sure to smile and wave as you pass, won't you?

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The Spring-cleaning bug



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Usually once a year I'm bitten by the spring-cleaning bug. Then, look out! Just ask my husband and kids! When my scrutinizing eye falls on an item that is either broken, no longer in use, or something I've moved twenty-three times in eight years, its days at our house are numbered. However, the initial burst of energy that catapults me into several productive de-cluttering days – (Wow! This feels great!) – soon winds down to frustrated under-my-breath muttering – (Why do we own so much stuff?) – and eventually fizzles out into tired resignation and defeat – (I'll deal with the rest of the junk next year!) It's a pattern I know all too well.

Besides owning less stuff to trip over by the time the job is done, probably the most lasting consequence of my spring-cleaning extravaganza is the spiritual reflection that inevitably results. The most perplexing question I've repeatedly come up against is this: why, when I obviously want to own less, do I still want to own more? I tell myself that isn't even logical. However, when I inspect my heart with the same vigor that I examine my home for unwanted junk, I understand that it's another version of what the apostle Paul wrote, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15).

Allow me to explain by fleshing out Paul's word in my spring-cleaning context.

The good I want to do is this: I want to live a stewardly life; I want to put my trust in God and not in things or money; I want to share with the poor; and I want to own less so that not too much of my time is spent cleaning, organizing, and maintaining my possessions.

So, why do I still at times struggle with wanting more? That's because

the things I hate to do are waging war with the good I want to accomplish. And what are those things I hate to do? I hate, because of my insecurity, being jealous of other people who have more than I do – perhaps a bigger home, more money, or a newer vehicle. I hate being resentful because others enjoy more success or recognition than I do. And I hate being ungrateful for what God has poured into my life because, in my pride, I think he owes me as much as he has given to others.

Ugly, isn't it, the terrain of the human heart? No wonder Paul exclaimed, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24) And no wonder John Newton, in his hymn, *Amazing Grace*, referred to himself as "a wretch like me!" I belong in the company of Paul and John Newton.

However, it's a good and blessed thing that Paul immediately answers his own question, "Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25a) Jesus Christ is the only one who can rescue us from our wretched state of spiritual death.

He's the only one who can spring-clean our hearts, helping us to do the good he wants us to do, also in terms of our material wealth.

He's the only one who can teach us the truth of his words which preface the parable of the rich fool: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

And he's the only one who can show us what people's lives do consist of in the context of a renewed relationship to God.

I've found that he does this by making me aware of the nature of all the situations in my own life that have been good and right and true, not because of any thing I've done but because of him. These situations have nothing to do with gaining, possessing, or hoarding material things. Rather, they consist of serving, loving, sharing, worshiping, and "offering your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1b). Inevitably, they are characterized by the peace, love, and God's presence.

Let me share some of those situations with you. When I visited a Christian family in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, I experienced depths of joy which owning a bigger home could never give me. When I help out at Friendship Group, a ministry to developmentally chal-

Ascension

“He travelled through the Heavens”

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. Hebrews 4:14

Abraham Kuyper

Jesus ascended to Heaven. Unlike all the rest of God's children on earth who fall asleep in death here, only to wake up in heaven, Jesus rose from the dead already here on earth and then went up to heaven from here, ascending in such a way that he left us and our world far behind and traversed alone the endless firmament to the highest heaven. It is really true, that our Lord left this earth and then arrived yonder.

And he not only travelled through the clouds and the atmosphere but also when he arrived in the heavens he continued travelling through that realm until he finally arrived in that region which marks the very heart of the revelation of God, the Throne of God. He ascended into that heaven and he travelled through the heavens, not as a phantom, a spirit or a “separated” soul, but as a fully human person, in body and in soul. Had you been able to watch him make his triumphal journey, you would have been able to distinguish all his physical attributes and even the expressions on his face at any moment of that journey.

And even now, should you die this moment, your glorified body would be taken up into heaven immediately after your death, and you would see Jesus, your Saviour, your Redeemer and your Guarantor, clothed with all the blinding light of his glory, yet always in such a way that each feature of his face would be clearly visible there in the very centre of the highest heaven.

Not one, but two “worlds” were created. One is the world in which we now live, and the other is the heavenly realm to which we are travelling. These two worlds relate to each other in such a way that the world we now live in is like the dark cellar of the resplendent mansion of the heavens where all rejoice and sing praises. That world above is the real world because the Lord God is everywhere present, but our earth is no more than a footstool for his feet. His royal throne on which he sits and rules in glory and majesty is not here below, but above in the highest heaven. And just as one looks up to an earthly king sitting on his throne and not down to his feet on a footstool,

so also here do God's children search for their merciful heavenly Father not at the footstool, but at the throne which is in heaven. For that is where our God is.

We ourselves are present in our ankles and feet, and certainly feel it when someone steps on our toe for they are hurting us. Yet when we meet the other we don't look at each others' toes but look the other in the eyes. The expressions of the face reflect the soul. In the same way, God is indeed everywhere present, but we seek him only in the place of his glory where his divine face shines upon his elect. Our God resides in the highest heavens. And that is why our case must be adjudicated not on earth, but in heaven.

Here on earth appearances can be misleading, but there in the highest heaven we find true reality. But who will go before us through the highest heavens to appear before the very throne of God, to claim forgiveness and an inheritance for us? That is the question answered by the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. He did exactly that! He has gone there! He did traverse the heavens and did arrive there in the centre of God's glory, which in Scripture is called the “right hand of God”.

In that glorious abode of the highest heavens he adjudicates our case. You could not have gone there yourself, and your plea, “Who will ascend to heaven for us?” would have been empty. No human being can do that; no creature of this earth could accomplish that. But Jesus could, and Jesus did. He ascended for you, and he did not think, once he got back there, “Now that I am back in heaven I will just live here and forget about the world that offered me nothing but a cross.” No, when Jesus arrived in Heaven he continued to love and care and be the gracious representation of that frightfully godless world as well as his thoughtless and thankless people. This is exactly what the Scripture tells us, “We have a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens” (Hebrews 4:14). Not to forget us, but to carry us in his heart. Not to curse us for our lack of love, but to pray for the salvation of our souls. Even in heaven Jesus is working on our behalf. His mediating task is not yet complete. He has made the complete and final sacrifice, but history is not yet finished. He is now preparing a place for us.

That magnificent fact relocates the actual place of his spiritual home for every child of God. When a father of young children goes

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lenged people, I am filled with the peace of Christ that nothing material could ever impart to me. When I serve homeless people at Out of the Cold, I am fulfilled in a way that a quest for owning more could never give me. And when I enjoy a meal with my adult children, sharing laughter, food, and serious conversation, I am satisfied in a way that the pursuit of status through acquiring things could never deliver to me.

But even though God, through the Holy Spirit, has pointed these things out to me, I

know my struggle between wanting to live with less, yet wanting more, isn't over. Does that make me feel defeated? Sometimes it does. But then I remember David's words, “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13-14). He has spring-cleaned my heart – dusting out the debris of sin through Christ's redemptive act on the cross – and he'll continue to sanctify me till the day I see him face to face.



Albrecht Dürer: Ascension

ahead of his family from the country to a magnificent city, and he buys a house in that city, they are listed as residents even if they have not joined him yet. The father's address is legally theirs. That is their “home” and they look forward to going there, because that is where their father now lives. They no longer consider their own location as “home”, but look forward to the home their father is preparing for them.

This is exactly the situation for God's children. There was a time when Jesus lived with us on earth, but now Jesus has moved. He has changed residence from this earth to a completely different realm. Now he lives up there. And because he lives in heaven, all those he has redeemed also consider that their home. Even if they have not yet travelled there to be with him, but remain on earth where Jesus once lived. We are registered there and our citizenship is already there and no longer here below. We belong to the city whose foundations are in the heaven of our God.

For us the journey does not begin until our death, but, like children who anticipate living with their father in an unknown city, we as the redeemed of the Lord begin to think about the new Jerusalem. We confer with other pilgrims

about that place. We study the road maps of that place and the layout of the holy city with all the beauty and holiness we anticipate to find there, just as the Scriptures have revealed them.

Even now we appreciate and enjoy every good and perfect gift which our Redeemer is sending us as a foretaste and proof of his love. In that way our earthly walk is already transferring us to heaven. We already consider ourselves citizens of heaven above. We already enjoy the inheritance which has been promised us.

Or rather, let us be brutally honest. That is the way it should be, and may at least be in our most ideal moments of faith. But on a day-to-day basis, our greatest sin is precisely this, that though we look forward to going to heaven, we nevertheless keep our focus on this earth and its riches, as if these constitute our true reality.

Merciful Lord Jesus, pull us up to be with you in your ascended glory. Do not let go of us, once you have set us free.

Note: This is part 3 of a series of meditations by Abraham Kuyper translated by Jack van Meggelen.

Mission

"If it is God's Will": Interview with Cora Hunse

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

It would be an understatement to say that Cora Hunse, a Primary Care Nurse Practitioner, has varied work experience. Hunse, 53, currently works with First Nations and Inuit Health for Health Canada on a remote fly in reserve and with Inuit people for a private agency. These part-time jobs allow her to volunteer in the Dominican Republic (DR) with La Clinica Cristitana de Salud Integral (The Christian Clinic for Integrated Health). This clinic is run under the auspices of two boards – a Dominican one and a charitable organization called Solid Rock Missions based in Ohio, which has built churches, clinics, and schools in the DR. She also works in the DR with Careforce International, a non-governmental organization based in Burlington, Ontario.

Christian Courier interviewed Hunse by e-mail to learn more about the DR, the challenges people face there, and the many ways she has experienced God's grace.

C.C.: How did God lead you to work for La Clinica Cristitana de Salud Integral?

Hunse: I went on a mission trip with another organization in the DR in 1991. One of the translators on the trip was Jim Smith, one of the clinic's founders. He was recruiting people to volunteer at the clinic. At the time, I was working for the University of Western Ontario as a research nurse and had no interest. I had a great job, was independent in my work, and had the opportunity to travel. But God had other plans. The following year, I met Jim again. I said yes when he asked me to volunteer. I haven't looked back. This is what I tell the medical teams about the value of mission trips and when a person is open to God.

C.C.: Tell me about the clinic.

Hunse: The clinic opened its doors in 1989 in an

effort to provide quality health care to the poor who were and still are marginalized. Many of the patients are illiterate and can't afford to go to private clinics. They can go to the public hospital, but they don't always get good care there.

The clinic is run and staffed by Dominicans – four general practitioners, two general surgeons, an orthopedic surgeon, and a gynecologist. Surgeons also come from the US to volunteer their services. Their specialties range from anesthesiology, general surgery, gynecology, plastic surgery, orthopedic surgeons, ENT specialists, and, this year, we had a neurosurgeon for the first time. The clinic does more surgeries than all the private clinics and the hospital in San Juan put together, with about half of the surgeries done by volunteer surgeons.

We also have cardiologists, internists, and general practitioners who volunteer in the outlying areas. Dentists also come and provide both preventive care and do extractions. These medical teams wouldn't function without nurses, operating room technicians, and other volunteers who translate, cook, and run the autoclave. None of these teams could function without the help of the guest house staff and their Dominican staff who cook, clean, organize, drive, entertain, garden, and answer guests' questions. Nor would this work be possible without the work of the US staff.

C.C.: How has God used the clinic to have an impact on the lives of poor people, as well as on the North American medical teams who volunteer there?

Hunse:

The clinic has made such an impact on that area. In 1993, in Barrio Nuevo, the barrio (neighborhood) across the street, 35 per cent of its children less than five years of age were malnourished and helped by the clinic.



Cora Hunse with Dr. Canario

When I was visiting the home of one of the malnourished children, I encountered her father walking on crutches. He said that he'd been unable to work for the past year and a half because he'd had an accident and had multiple fractures in his leg. He couldn't afford the hardware, never mind the surgery, to fix his leg. As a result of his unemployment, there was less food on the table and his children were malnourished.

I e-mailed a friend of mine, an orthopedic surgeon, who was coming to the DR in the near future. He asked me to get some x-rays and send them to him. Getting an x-ray involved transporting this man to the nearest center that had an x-ray machine, an hour and a half drive from his house.

When we got to the clinic, the power was out, which meant another two-hour wait. When we finally got his x-ray, the technician asked what we were doing with it. He told me of another gentleman who had a similar problem. I also sent his x-rays to the US, and the surgeon brought the hardware and fixed both their legs. Six weeks later, the father of the malnourished girl was working in the fields. Two months later, she was fully recovered because there was food on the table.

On another home visit, a health promoter in a remote town asked if I would come and look in on a sick old man. I could hear his cries as I entered his home. He was lying on a small cot moaning in pain. He had a high fever. Upon examination, I noticed he had a hernia that was probably incarcerated. They lived about a two-hour drive from town, and had no money. Immediately, I wrote a note to the Dominican surgeon, Dr. Caceres. I gave the man's daughter the equivalent of twenty dollars to get him to the hospital. God used me to save that man's life that day.

In another case, a mother brought her seven-year-old daughter, Neyda, to me because she couldn't walk due to protein malnutrition which caused swelling in her legs, arms, abdomen, and face. The swelling in Neyda's legs was so bad that her skin was cracked and oozing. She was also a victim of neglect. According to her neighbors and other relatives, she had often been beaten and maltreated.

Neyda was hospitalized and then lived with me for several weeks. She was subsequently adopted by the director of the clinic. God used many people in Neyda's life to show how he loves her.

God uses the time medical teams spend in the DR to make them aware of how rich we are in North America. The clinic and guest house are situated in the midst of some poor barrios. The houses – made with sticks or with tin cut out of oil cans, and with dirt floors – are close by. The noise of the generator reminds you that there's no power again. Imagine! Every day the power goes off. Also, there's no potable water. You can't drink the water from the tap. Other physical reminders are children walking barefoot because they cannot afford shoes, or their clothes are rags.

Despite the obvious lack of material things, the Dominican people welcome you into their homes and share something with you. It may be a cup of coffee or a couple of oranges from a tree, but you will never leave without being offered something.

C.C.: What is your role in the nutrition program for malnourished children?

Hunse:

One of the most tragic things one can do is hold a dying child, and that's especially tragic when they have died from lack of food. The first time I held a child that died, I cried and cried and cried. Dr. Canario, the director of the clinic, told me in a matter-of-fact tone that if I was going to cry like that every time a child died, I should get



Mission



Neyda when she arrived and now



back on the plane to Canada. The death of children is such an integral part of life in the DR. In Canada, when a child dies, it's usually from a fatal disease or an accident. In the DR, many families have lost more than one child.

From 1993-1995 I was the administrator of the program in San Juan.

There was a decrease in the number of malnourished children in the area after that. In 2004, a satellite clinic was built in El Cercado about one hour west of San Juan. Dr. Canario noticed that there were many malnourished children in that area and asked if I would consider restarting the Child Nutrition Program.

God has wonderful timing. He knew that I still had some vacation owing. He also knew that I had a valuable contact who worked at Nestle in the DR. My sister-in-law's brother had recently moved to Santo Domingo. Because of his influence, Nestle donated truckloads of whole powder milk to get us started, and a Presbyterian church in South Carolina generously gave us a donation. In three weeks, we had one hundred children enrolled.

Currently my role is to raise funds for the program and to provide support for the people who work there.

C.C.: You have a unique perspective, having grown up in an affluent society and now working with poor people. What can poor people teach affluent western Christians?

Hunse: The poor seem to share much more willingly even though they have less to share. Once I took a poor family out to a place like Kentucky Fried Chicken. They hadn't eaten that day or the day prior to that. The children came with me in the van, but wouldn't enter the restaurant because they had no shoes. I bought take-out meals for them, then dropped them off at home. Later, when I went past their home I saw that they were sharing with their friends.

As affluent Christians, we give. But what

does it mean to give sacrificially? That family didn't have food for the next day, yet they shared what they had.

In the DR there is also much more a sense of living in the present because tomorrow you might die. They have an expression there: "Si Dios quiere" (If it is God's will.)

C.C.: What are the challenges and joys of your work? How has your work in the DR had an impact on your faith life?

Hunse:

Working in the DR has stretched me considerably. God knew that I would be exposed to all kinds of different denominations. I had grown up in the Christian Reformed Church and wasn't exposed to other faiths. Upon preparing for my time in the DR, I did a primary health care and midwifery course in Alaska. It was a faith-based program with a very charismatic focus. I became accustomed to the midwives speaking in tongues, and I gained a whole new perspective. Solid Rock Missions is nondenominational, but has its roots with the evangelical Mennonites so this also gave me a different perspective. In First Nations communities I worship with people from many different faith backgrounds and it has enriched my faith life.

When I arrived in the DR, my Spanish was limited. The missionaries that I lived with went home for the summer so the only one I could speak English to was God. My faith life really became strong then. He has been my constant companion. He has guided me through many dangerous situations – in small aircrafts with a drunken pilot, in a dugout canoe through a storm with no life vests, and in the crazy traffic of the DR. He has provided me with wisdom in emergency situations – in delivering a baby by candle light, in providing comfort to a mother who has lost a child, and in helping me speak Spanish. None of these things are my accomplishments. They are all his.

Taking life in stride

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Action is character. F. Scott Fitzgerald

Love is not a natural act. It is a practiced art form. Source unknown

"Your parents love each other," my teenage friends told me when they would visit our home many years ago.

"I guess so," I would answer

"You can tell," they would continue

"Your parents hug and kiss each other," they said.

"Oh?" I would say.

"They have fun together, and they snuggle in the car," they added.

"Yes...well..." I would ask...not knowing what else to say.

"Our parents aren't like that," they would finally explain

"Oh?" I would say again, being at a loss for words.

Looking back, this conversation taught me what is normal for one family is not necessarily normal for another. But equally important, it helped me to pay attention to the positive things my parents portrayed in their lives.

Every year during May, my thoughts turn to my father who died 21 years ago this month. I have also been thinking about my father more lately because my mother is becoming so frail. More than anything she would have liked to grow old with him. And the older I am becoming, the more thoughtful I am about my parents' life.

My father was 15 years old when he lost his father in 1933. I remember looking at my son when he was 15 thinking, I cannot image what that may have felt like for my father. When I travelled to Holland a while back, I visited my grandparent's grave. My aunt remembers her mother crying and crying when their father was buried. She was a young girl at that time and my father, who was the oldest, looked lost and forlorn. Soon after, he became the main breadwinner for his mother and his three younger siblings – a young boy taking on the responsibilities of an adult man. My father never talked about it much. I understand why. Life was hard...and he simply accepted it.

When my father married my mother in 1942 he moved into her family home because my mother was caring for her widowed father and two younger brothers. In other words, my father became the main breadwinner for his in-law family. Sometimes he would take my grandfather with him on his trucking route for a change of pace. My grandfather would be so fearful of going over bridges with the truck, he would get out and walk to the other side! Over time, my grandfather passed away and the brothers eventually went their own way.

From the stories my mother has told me, it seemed my father readily took things in stride and was not afraid of challenges. This was pretty obvious when he immigrated with my mother to Canada with eight children, and promptly had three more as they were settling in a new country. "Not unusual for that time," my mother tells me. Some years later, when he had the most mouths to feed he walked 'off the job,' because 'staying' meant he was forced to join a union. And being a man of integrity he was full of righteous indignation. How can we not marvel at the tenacity, commitment and the perseverance of the older generation?

And while my parents struggled, at times, to put food on the table when all the children were still home, they still appreciated the beauty of the natural world. I remember my father bringing home pussy willows in the spring and branches of red and yellow colored leaves in autumn. My mother would put them in a beautiful dark blue ceramic pot. When some of the adult children finally left home and my parents moved to Surrey, my father would spend various evenings every spring in the garden so my mother could plant the many flowers that would bloom all summer long. In the back of the garden my mother would have flowers bursting with color climbing on and over large artistic tree stumps. Under the family room deck my father would help my mother hang baskets filled with flowers of all the colors of the rainbow spilling over its sides.

Was my father perfect? No, he was not, but neither was I. My relationship with my father during adolescence and young adulthood was more tumultuous than peaceful. The more I think about it now the more I realize I was usually in conflict with my father when I was most like him – wanting to work through my own challenges and if he did not approve – I would be full of righteous indignation!

But now that I am older and hopefully wiser, I am realizing that once we stop seeing our parents with the eyes of a child or even of a young adult, we are finally able to appreciate them for the people they were. And so, when I help care for my mother as she is becoming more and more frail, I think of the time my father spent caring for his mother's family as well as my mother's family. I think about how he just took it in stride and so I figured I would do the same.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.
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Corinthians

Hoping through death

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

1 Corinthians 15:19

A. A. van Ruler

We are tempted to ask why Paul speaks so bluntly here. To say that we are to be pitied more than all men if we put our hope in Christ only for – or in – this life is quite harsh. Isn't it a good thing to live out our lives in surrender and dependence on Christ? No, says Paul, not if that's all. Then it is a terrible thing.

Why does Paul speak in such radical terms? Commentators give different answers. One answer is that such hope in Christ remains futile and empty. It is by nature nothing more than hope, a hope that can never be fulfilled if there is no resurrection of the dead, for then there is no real victory over death, and then God is not busy saving his entire creation.

One may hope for these things, but then he is hanging everything on a mirage. Such surrender to an illusion is painful. It makes us pitiful.

Another commentator points to the privations with which Christians comfort themselves in this hope. They don't fully and lustfully enjoy this earthly life, but devote themselves to serving the Lord. The thing they hope for they don't receive, and the things that are available to them they don't take. This too is a shame and to be pitied.

A third commentator suggests that being a Christian is even more strenuous than this. It is like being a lightning rod on the rooftop of this world. A Christian attracts the lightning of God's judgment on himself. For judgment always begins with the house of God.

Only those who know and love God experience the problematics of human existence to its full depth. A Christian is a person who lives in contested terrain. Only he knows the lostness of human existence. Non-Christians aren't so easily perturbed. Essentially they have it easier. Therefore, the Christian, bearing the burden of existence before God's face, is the most to be pitied of all people.

This is one way of understanding Paul's harsh words. He, of course, means to point out that in reality things are very different. Christ *has* been raised from the dead. So there is a resurrection of the dead. This forms a horizon round about our entire temporal existence. A flood of light and glory dawns that pours itself out over all that is. God is busy with his world. He holds the whole world in his hands.

But he doesn't just hold it. That would hardly be a comforting thought – that the world just lies there in his hands forever motionless. God's hands move. He is busy. He struggles and plays with his world. He pushes it through death and judgment, through futility and lostness. But he carries it through. And then he raises it up out of all its corruption. Therefore, it is not just for this life we may hope in Christ. Some translations read "in this life". Paul means to say that the Christian hope is such that we can hope in Christ even in death.



Temptation of Jesus by James Tissot

For we must all come to this point – death. It is not just a moment, the moment of dying. Death is a condition and has duration. There is the kingdom of death. It surrounds us when we die. Death is the enemy of God and of his good creation, and he is destroyed only in the end.

But the genuine, pure hope in Christ is not frightened off by a little thing, not even by the little thing we call death. Even when we die we can stand on our hope in Christ. Even when we have already died and are in death, we still hope. That is to say, in the grave I may not still have hope and expectation, but rather by the power of the Holy Spirit I have become a rock of hope and expectation. In life and in death I am wholly cast without remainder on God himself, and he is busy with me, with me and my world. This is what Christ's resurrection has brought

to light. And it is the truth of the resurrection of the dead.

This is why we are more to be pitied than all people if we only put our hope in Christ for this life. Then our expectations are broken off prematurely. Then we must say, I weep for the flower broken in the bud whose bloom withers at the break of day. Then our expectations are from the beginning marked as a mirage.

If salvation is not actually able to stand up to death in all its reality and if it cannot overcome the power of death then it isn't salvation.

Death is the great power that rules our lives and that turns it into a gradual dying. Standing in the midst of life, we are continually ambushed by the thought of death. And that thought threatens to wholly cripple us inwardly, so that we are in danger of losing all joy and courage.

Only those who continue to hope and who refuse to let themselves be confused, not even by death will be blessed and happy.

This is what it's all about: that we do not try to hide from the thought of death in order to snatch some happiness from this life. But we must take life and death as they are, and in both life and in death to radically realize that we are wholly dependent on God.

But he is the God of the resurrection. This is

why through everything he awakens hope in our hearts. This is why we must put all our expectations on him alone. This is liberation.

Otherwise, we may run back and forth year after year from one thing to another, whether after things in our hearts or in the world, without ever finding enduring peace. We will keep bumping like billiard balls against the walls of death. Peace and renewing power only come when we discover that we with our world in life and in death are in the hands of this God who is Lord over life and death.

Pastoral Excellence

Church leadership: One size doesn't fit all

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

In the two decades since Rev. Tom Bomhof graduated from seminary and entered parish ministry, he has served three churches of varying sizes and demographics. His first congregation was a small church of just over 100 members in a quiet rural town – quite a contrast to his current charge, a much larger congregation with over 800 members in the bustling Vancouver suburb of Surrey. While in his first parish Bomhof flew solo, in his current church he is part of a staff team made up of three full-time pastors, a part-time worship coordinator, and two-part time administrators.

"In my first church, I was able to go along on every elder's visit," Bomhof says. He recalls with fondness how the small size of his early congregations allowed him to be deeply involved in pastoral care and visiting. He could attend most social events hosted by members. He was hands-on and knee-deep in the needs of the congregation. But as a leader he sometimes felt isolated and alone.

"In my first two churches, where I was the only pastor, I often wished I had more people to talk to and collaborate with about ministry," Bomhof says.

He says that, over the years, experience has taught him that no type of ministry – big or small – is challenge-free. While ministering in a smaller church can be isolating, larger churches also have unique challenges. "Sometimes serving in a larger church can be a little overwhelming because there is a lot more need in the congregation and it can be difficult to stay on top of things."

Different congregations require different skills

Bomhof says he has learned that serving a larger congregation requires different skills than he relied upon in his smaller charges, and he's intentionally sought out opportunities to hone those much-needed skills. He is not alone in that. In fact, he is part of a growing number of pastors who are gathering in peer-learning groups with other pastors from similar-sized ministries.

Some churches have a thousand members and state-of-the-art facilities, are located in growing urban areas and require a team approach to ministry. Other churches serve communities where populations are in decline, where a handful of worshippers meet in buildings that date back to the previous century. Different sizes and types of congregations call for different skills and strengths in a pastor.

Rev. Walt Brouwer is a pastor of a 630+ member church in Edmonton, Alberta. He, along with Bomhof, is one of 14 pastors meeting and learning together in a peer-group called "Leading the Larger Christian Reformed Church in Western Canada." Brouwer says organizing peer groups for pastors based on congregational size simply makes good sense. "It's just like in small groups," he says. "The single greatest element for successful small groups is affinity. In our peer-learning group, we have affinity because we have a lot of the same issues to contend with, many of the same highlights and frustrations, so our conversations can have much greater focus."

Like Bomhof, Brouwer acknowledges that the need for pastors to develop skills appropriate to congregational size and type is "huge." Being part of a peer group with other pastors serving similar-sized congregations has been a real blessing, he says. "It's been great working with colleagues, rubbing shoulders

with them. It has been a huge encouragement and practical ideas flow from that," he says. The affinity of the group and their shared experiences allowed them to quickly identify topics that were a priority for all of them, including governance, leadership, pastoral care, staffing and spiritual health. "We've read a number of books and had a number of guest speakers," he says.

On a practical level, size-based peer groups have to be creative in their structure in order to bring pastors together over a larger geographical area. It might seem less complicated to form a peer group around geography (i.e. southern Alberta or Greater Vancouver) rather than congregational demographics. But size-based groups can work well using new models. For instance, Bomhof's and Brouwer's peer group involves pastors from three provinces, with thousands of kilometres dividing them. For this reason, they've organized into "regional cluster groups," or small groups of three or four pastors who are close enough in distance to meet more regularly for study, networking, and mutual support.

We meet three times a year as a larger group, and six times a year in smaller, regional clusters," says Bomhof. "We had our big meeting in October, and we invited [author and teacher] Alan Roxburgh to speak on becoming a missional leader. We look forward to our smaller meetings in which we are able to share our lives with each other and encourage one another on a more regular basis."

Rev. Henry Kranenburg is pastor of a 650-member congregation in Hamilton, Ontario. He, too, felt drawn to forming a peer group based on congregational size. His peer group, entitled "Leading the Large Multigenerational Missional Church" brings together 13 pastors from throughout southern Ontario.

A sense of relief

"We all got together and realized we were facing similar questions," says Kranenburg, who notes that the peer group has brought a sense of "relief" to him and other pastors, who realize that many of the challenges they're facing are professional, not personal. "We're discovering that the ministry issues that we're facing are not unique to our ability or inability to minister but are related to congregational size. In larger churches the pastor can't do everything, but it's also important not to lose sight of equipping the people for ministry. For instance, in our next retreat, we will be looking at pastoral care. What does pastoral care look like for the pastor who may be preaching but not as involved in the direct care of the congregation?"

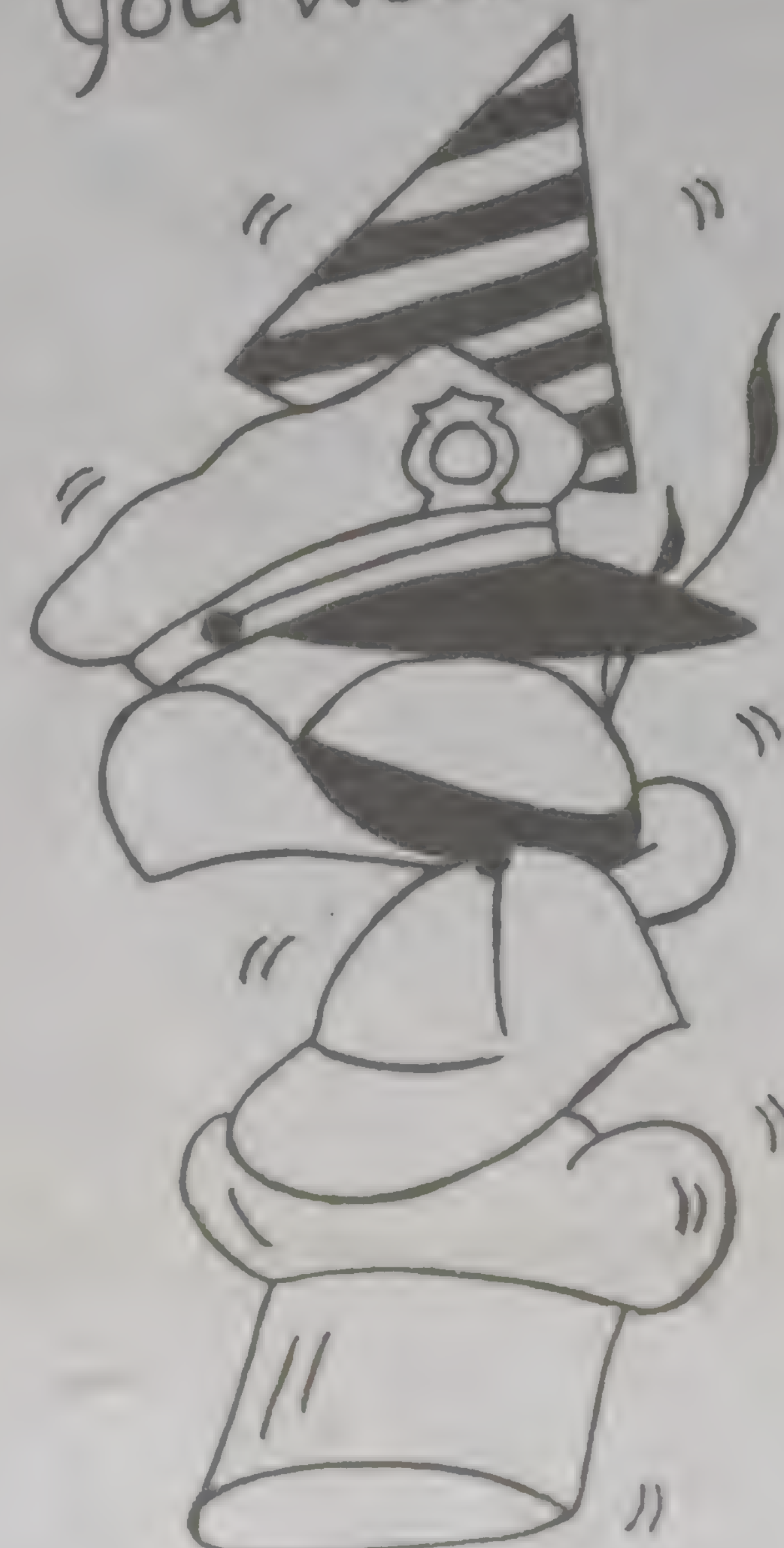
Bomhof says his peer group involvement has made him a more confident leader of a large church. "We now understand the strengths and weaknesses of a large church and know what we need to be and do as leaders," he says.

Peer groups based on size are also helpful at the congregational level. When pastors are encouraged and grow more confident in their understanding of governance issues, for instance, this knowledge is often eagerly absorbed by council members and church volunteers.

Staying focused

Bomhof notes that his congregation recently went through a restructuring, and being able to apply his peer-group learnings to real-life situations has been rewarding. "I ... See Church leadership p. 16

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Farming

In the plight of small businesses... farms tend to do better

It always amazes me how many small businesses change hands. Some businesses change hands again and again. And some businesses just close.

Many people, at some time in their lives, think about running their own business. Perhaps they want to be their own boss, introduce a new product or service, or take advantage of a business opportunity.

Besides operating a farm, I owned a restaurant on main street in Renfrew for five years. I enjoyed the restaurant business, but it was too much work. I was working all the time. The business changed hands again.

Before venturing into the world of entrepreneurship and self-employment, you'll need to ask yourself some important questions. Are you a people person? Do you get along well with the public? Do you have good organizational skills? Can you handle paper work and bookkeeping? Remember, the first few years statistically will not be great financially.

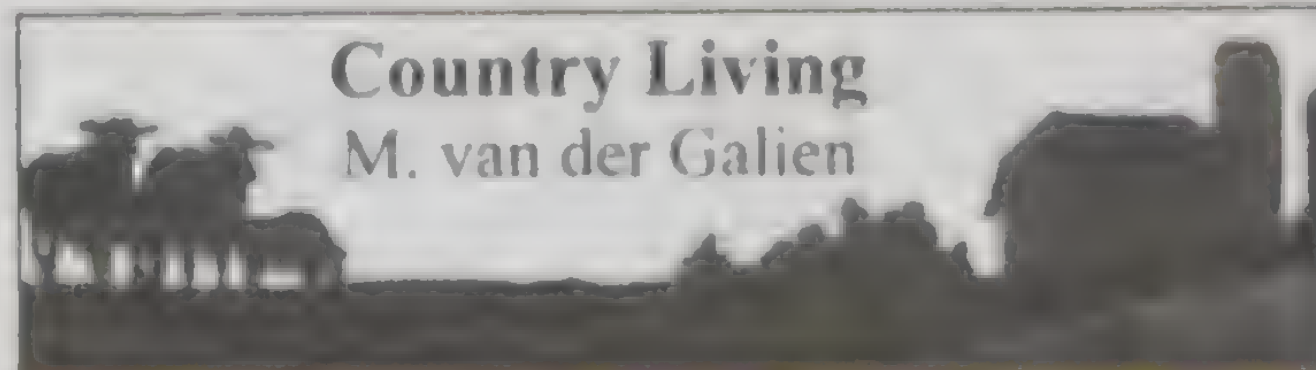
What are your goals? Are they financial? A new lifestyle? Do you want to satisfy your creative self? Are you following a life-long dream?

Many baby boomers are retiring from their conventional careers and finally doing what they love to do. These are the people that are most likely to succeed, say the experts. They are mature, financially stable and are doing what they enjoy. These individuals have more time, their children are grown and educated and now is the time for them to pursue a more satisfying, often creative second career.

There are numerous reasons why businesses fail. A few years ago I saw a gas station being built on the outskirts of a small town. The location was great if it had been built right beside the highway where motorists could see the pumps. It was too far off the highway. A dirt road led down to the pumps. Motorists going by couldn't see the pumps unless they were looking for them. As expected, the place soon closed down.

A favorite hobby can lead to a new business venture. Profit margins in these operations tend to be very low. And if the craft shop or small store is on a road that doesn't have the travel volume, it will probably just be a seasonal type of business.

If you look at farms as a business, their success rate is much better than most small businesses. That statement probably surprised you. Banks know that. You don't see farms change hands again and again. Many farmers are doing well. They usually don't



like to say so publicly, but farming is very profitable for some.

In the past decade in Canada, at least half of new companies went out of business before their third anniversary, and only one-fifth of them survive a decade, says a Statistic Canada study investigating success and failure in fledgling business ventures.

The study shows that about one out of every four new firms (23 per cent) won't make it past its first birthday. It looked at 1.3 million businesses that began operations during a 10-year period.

The study found that new businesses have short lives, about six years on average.

It concludes that there is no single reason why some new firms fail while others succeed. For example, a firm's size, in terms of employees, as well as its business experience has a strong impact.

First-year businesses that are among the very smallest are 11 per cent most likely to fail than first-year firms that are among the very largest.

In general, the study said, larger firms, have better chances of survival. They make more substantial investments to start and are better prepared to solve the problems associated with running a new business.

It also found that firms in certain industries fare better than in others. For example, first-year firms in manufacturing have a 21 per cent chance of failing in their first year.

In the service sector, new firms in wholesale trade, real estate industries and business service fare relatively well. First-year firms in wholesale trade have an 18 per cent chance of failing during the first year, while first-year firms in both business services and real estate industries have a 19 per cent chance.

In comparison, first-year firms in communications have a 28 per cent chance of failing during the initial year.

Starting your own business often has insurmountable challenges. The rewards, when achieved, are most definitely worth the effort.

Maynard van der Galien is getting married (for the first time at age 59) on September 20 to Helen Mae Waite (a nurse from Brockville, Ont.). He met her six years ago this month at the restaurant — on Mother's Day.



Church leadership ... continued from p. 15

report to my council about what I'm learning, and it's amazing how open they are to this. The peer group has given us some encouragement to make the changes that are needed in our congregation."

Kranenburg says the peer group helps pastors and their churches stay focused on mission. "In getting together, we've recognized that we're looking at issues that are important to all of us in building the church; they are not unique to our ministries. We're learning that we need to just try things and make some adjustments and that's OK."

Making those adjustments is all part of the journey, say these pastors, and it's a journey that looks quite different from the helm of a larger vessel. "If we going to be a big church, then we're going to have to act like a big church," Bomhof says. When it comes to

ministry, one size definitely does not fit all.

Reading List for Leaders of Larger Churches
Can a Pastor Do It Alone? by Dr. Melvin J. Steinbron

Courageous Leadership by Bill Hybels

Developing the Leaders Around You by John C. Maxwell

Leading with a Limp: Turning Your Struggles into Strengths by Dan B. Allender

The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World by Alan Roxburgh

One Size Doesn't Fit All by Gary L. McIntosh

Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God by Greg Ogden

A B C...

Curt Gesch

This is a continuation. Part 1 appeared in the March 31 issue.

I

Institutions:

For whatever reason, I see corporate bodies, entities, even principles, the way primitive people saw the stars. I group their million unaccountable points into one bear, or one archer, or one Perseus holding the head of one Medusa, and I hold them accountable as if they were the man sitting next to me on the trolley.

Perhaps the people who staff the institution, by reason of their human frailty, cannot always be held accountable, but the institution itself need not ever be let off the hook. It lives by the myth of its singularity, and by the myth of its singularity it can be taken by the throat.

Mark Helprin, *Memoir from Antproof Case*

Irony:

Irony is scissors, a divining rod, always pointing in two directions. If the evil act can't be erased, then neither can the good. It's as accurate a measure as any of a society: what is the smallest act of kindness that is considered heroic?

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

Interesting things:

... From any still-life arrangement or model's pose, the artist could produce either a short study or a long one. Evidently, a given object took no particular amount of time to draw; instead the artist took the time, or didn't take it, at pleasure. And, similarly, things themselves possessed no fixed and intrinsic amount of interest; instead things were interesting as long as you had attention to give them.

Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*

Image of God:

Helen sank obediently to her knees. She said, O God, now that she [her mother] is Thine rather than mine, do something about her. If she was created in Thy Image, then the system is an imperfect one.

Penelope Lively, *Passing On*

J

Jello salads:

[Mary] thought she'd me trouble by bringing along the "dish" [to the potluck supper]. She thought because I was so busy she would make one of her special Jell-O salads. I do not say I am glad she has done this, because I don't like her Jell-O salads. I've said so before. She puts in walnuts or chopped celery, macaroni, onions, miniature marshmallows, or, worst of all, sliced radishes.

Louise Erdrich, *The Beet Queen*



"Did you notice that I brought in a special pan [for the potluck]?" I ask.

"No," [says Mary]. She doesn't even ask what it was. . . .

"Well, listen a minute," I say. "It had your name on it."

"I taped it on the bottom of the pan," I tell her, "although I made the dish myself."

She is silent now and curious.

"What was in it?" she asks.

"I made a Jell-O salad."

"Oh," she says, "what kind?"

"The kind full of nuts and bolts," I say, "plus washers of all types. I raided Russell's toolbox for the special ingredients."

Her pupils harden to pinpoints. She trains a long look on my face. Then she turns away and huffs on her coffee, as if to cool it. I expect she will laugh at any moment and see the joke. . . .

Louise Erdrich, *The Beet Queen*

Quotations

Jewishness:

My own theory is possibly a very sad one that has certainly evolved since the Massey Lectures – that God has decided to make Jews of everybody. By that, I mean very simply that He's going to teach everybody else what it's like to have to wander, what it's like not to have safety and protection. Millions in Eastern Europe will try to stream westward because there will be nothing left for them. The number from Africa cannot even be calculated. The movements of despair – it does look to me as if a lot of human beings are going to learn what it is like to be Jewish, to be refugees, hunted, people who have to learn languages to survive, people who have to relearn jobs, ways of life. Well, it's pretty awful, but it's a lot of fun too.

George Stein in *Original Minds* (Eleanor Watchtel, ed.)

Judgement:



She sat over a piece of simple needlework, and worked as if her life was in every stitch; as if one day the angels of the Last Judgment would hold up the pot-holder with its design of forget-me-nots, point to a stitch that was too small, or not straight, and say for the whole world, all the gathered souls of all the ages to hear: 'Janet McIvor, did you do this?'

David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon*

K

Kaddish:

... Herr Katzenbogen helped me say Kaddish for my parents and uncle Salomon. I was struck again, as I had been many, many years before, that the commemorative prayer for the dead was an adulation of the immense holiness of God, never mentioning the dead for whose dying it is spoken.

The weight of history, shifted from our shoulders, shatters and breaks as it falls. What remains is the lightness of man and the immensity of God. (p. 223)

from *an Admirable Woman*, 1983, Arthur A. Cohen

Kath (Kathy):

When Oliver remembers Kath, that luminous quality predominates, the way your spirits lifted a notch, just because she was there: the day seemed more promising, the adrenalin ran stronger. And really, Oliver thinks, that is distinctly odd. Perverse, even. Kath had gaiety and verve, but she was not especially wise, nor clever, nor well-informed. If one is being realistic, one would have to say that her contribution to society was nil. She did nothing useful, had no sustained employment, was neither creative nor industrious. She had no children, if children are to be seen as fulfilment of a social purpose. She simply was – as a flower is, or a bird. People are meant to be more than that, are they not?

Penelope Lively, *The Photograph*



L

Learning:

... learning is the arousal and satisfaction of curiosity.
Penelope Lively, *Spiderweb*

Law:

... Listen, this is Goethe's sonnet about a sonnet.
"This is the way with all kinds of creation
Useless for an unbridled spirit
To try to achieve the summit of perfection
Only self-discipline can lead to greatness.
Accepting limits will reveal the master,
And only the law can give us freedom."
Monique Charlesworth, *The Children's War*

Law:

One of the things our parents were concerned about was our spiritual life. The Bible was read daily in the homes. That was the last thing that was done at night. Sundays were kept and you had your morning service at eleven o'clock where there was Bible reading and hymns were sung. All the work had to be done Saturday evening and you weren't allowed to go riding or skating on Sunday. The folks followed the commandments of Moses, "Thou shalt not—", so to speak. Perhaps they went to the extreme a little, yet I think a lot of their rules helped us along the way. Our parents were always reminding us to be honest and truthful and kind to others. So I think these were some of the things that helped us to be contented with one another and with what we had which wasn't very much, compared with what we have today.

Elizabeth Goudie, *Woman of Labrador*
Peter Martin Associates Limited, 1973

M

Monotheism:

The leading exponents of the Indian Reformation, while emphasizing the path of Bhakti as the simplest and truest way to the attainment of spiritual bliss, from the outset laid stress on monotheism. To a certain extent it was the result of Hinduism's contact with Islam, established especially through the influence of the Persian Sufis, never before had the grade of the One Supreme God been sought with such ecstatic fervour as by the neo-bhakti school. The leaders of this school preached before the masses what they themselves had realized. The purpose was to combat the inertia of age-old convention, and to inculcate in an animus-driven world the value of love and harmony. In the fourteenth century, Ramananda preached in the north the devotional doctrine of Ramanuja, the substance of which that everyone was admitted to divine grace without distinction of creed or caste. His two great disciples were a barber named Raidas and the famous Kabir, who is said to have been brought up in a Muslim weaver's family. A true rationalist, Kabir rejected rituals and penances. He strove hard to remove Hindu-Muslim animosity, saying: "God is One, whether we worship Him as Allah or as Rama." He died in 1418, and his followers today number several millions. In Maharashtra, Namadeva tried in somewhat the same way to oppose unreason. Towards the end of the fifteenth century Nanak, Punjabi Khatri, took up the mission of Kabir and went about preaching in mosques and temples. He denounced the Vedas, caste and idolatry, and his catholicity shocked his contemporaries. He became



The intersections of K

what are these words, these letters
these loops, bends, and forks thrown together
– what use, these little roadmaps?

changing the picture
doesn't change the actual roads
they're just words
you can't go back

looking at the forked letter Y,
the question within a question
– or the intersections of K –
if I would have taken the left
instead of the right branch on the letter T
or more closely followed the W
instead of avoiding its sharp corners

no
here I am,
here we are
words and I
letters and I
U and I

they're a bundle of sticks to shuffle like
cards
and rearrange – the illusion of power over time –
the mapmaker's hubris

roll words like dice,
but it's more than gambling;
scatter words like bones,
like consulting an oracle

but I'm losing faith

Kelly Shepherd

the founder of the Sikh religious order. ...

I.H.R. Ghosa, *An Outline History of the Indian People*

Methusaleh:

How to explain Methuselah's longevity? The Psalmist – Methuselah's descendant King David – refers to a thousand years being a day in God's eyes ('For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.'). Hence, despite his longevity, Methuselah did you not live for even one whole day – he would have had to live to the age of 1,000 for that. Rabbinical tradition asserts that this curtailing of Methuselah's age was done deliberately, in order to counteract the heathen concept of human beings being admitted to the ranks of gods by virtue of their longevity.

Sir Martin Gilbert,

Dearest Auntie Fori: The Story of the Jewish People

Middle schools:

... God in His great mercy gave us middle school so that we could see what hell would be like and learn to avoid it in later life, although like so many of His good ideas it has not worked out all that well.

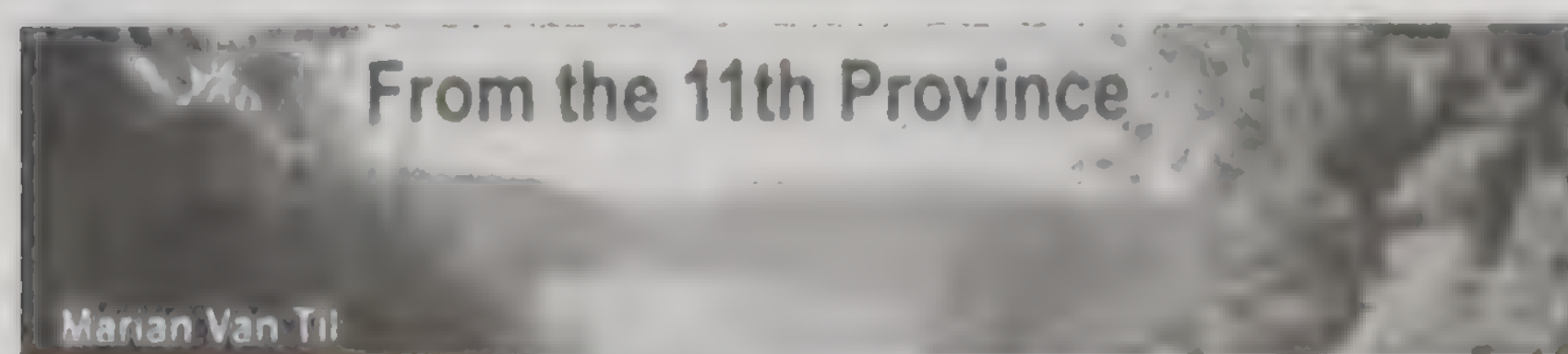
Michael Gruber, *Valley of Bones*

Music:

The process of musical creation is still little understood by scientists, psychiatrists, critics, and other embalmers.

Joel Vance, *Fats Waller: His Life and Times*

Reflections



From the 11th Province

Marian Van Til

If the Bible has become a closed book today, the Old Testament is truly a mystery.

We Reformed people are blessed in that our faith tradition, since its inception with Calvin himself, has properly emphasized the Old Testament as well as the New. (Next year will mark the 400th anniversary of Calvin's birth, by the way.) A Reformed view of Scripture understands that both testaments must be read and comprehended together as God's complete written revelation of himself. But when the Old Testament is disregarded as it mostly is today (except for some of the Psalms and a few well-known stories about the Patriarchs), the result is a limited God and a lopsided faith.

The Old Testament is unpalatable to modern sensibilities. God, it is said, is easily aggravated, vengeful and arbitrarily wipes people out, willy nilly. That "Old Testament God" is juxtaposed to the "New Testament God" represented by a meek Jesus who teaches us to love our enemies and do good to those who spitefully use us. In this view the Spirit works at Jesus's side, but God the angry Father recedes into the background (and a good thing, too).

How God reveals his character in Scripture is something I think of often. But there's a particular reason I'm doing so now.

An obscure oratorio revealed

When I was working on my biography of George Frideric Handel I also began writing guides (not yet published) to some of Handel's Old Testament oratorios. One of these guides – to *Joshua* – is turning out to be helpful to me just now. The symphony chorus I'm in (Chorus Niagara) will perform Handel's *Joshua* in St. Catharines on May 10. It is my task to write the program notes and also to give a pre-concert talk to help the audience understand the work.

The oratorio's text (libretto) is a poetic take on incidents from Joshua. (The identity of writer of the libretto is uncertain.) For relief from many strong allusions to war an extra-biblical love story is included between Othniel, who was later a judge in Israel, and Acsah ("Achsah"), the woman the Bible says Othniel married.

Joshua was appreciated in Handel's lifetime (1684-1759), and also in the 19th century. But in the 20th century it fell out of favor largely because of its dramatization of "bellicose themes" from the Old Testament. That is: it presents approvingly and graphically the fall of Jericho and other battles between Israel and the pagan nations whom God ordered destroyed.

The music, as always with Handel, is wonderful. But explaining the nature of the libretto to a general audience in the 21st century may be like walking into the proverbial minefield. That's not because the text is bad (though the poetry isn't on a par with Britain's best). It's because our modern age has lost the picture of God and the nature of his relationship with his people Israel which the Old Testament reveals, an understanding that was still part of common knowledge and belief in Handel's half of the 18th century.

'Ev'ry breast with fury burn'

The oratorio assumes, too, that listeners will mentally fill in the blanks when mere passing references are made to a biblical name (Gilgal) or incident (Rahab saving the spies). And above all, it assumes that listeners are Christians who will, and do, align themselves with the Israelites as the people of God, and who therefore readily accept the destruction of Jericho, Ai and their inhabitants because those inhabitants are God-deniers, and God commanded it. But how do I explain these words to

modern Canadians:

*Haste, Israel haste, your glitt'ring arms prepare!
With valour abounding,
The city surrounding,
Deal death and dreadful war!*

Or these, as the walls of Jericho fall:

*Glory to God! The strong cemented walls,
The tott'ring tow'rs, the pond'rous ruin falls.
The nations tremble at the dreadful sound,
Heav'n thunders, tempests roar, and groans the ground.*

Or this, after the initial defeat at Ai:

*With redoubled rage return,
Ev'ry breast with fury burn,
And the heathen soon shall feel
The force of your avenging steel.*

All this was penned by a mid-18th-century writer in a time when war still held an aura of glorious adventure and absolute necessity for the survival of one's nation. If scholars, writers and artists of that time had begun to look back to the glories of ancient Greece and Rome (an influence revealed in some of *Joshua*'s poetry), the foundation of thought was still a Calvinist-infused Anglican understanding of the Bible and Christian faith. Despite some inroads by Deism and Rationalism, orthodox Christianity was alive and well in Britain in 1747 when Handel wrote *Joshua* (six years after he wrote *Messiah*).

So the easy acceptance of the Israelites' annihilation of their enemies and the shouts of "Glory to God" even while Jericho's "strong cemented walls" crumble emanates first from a Christian worldview, however discomfiting that view is today, and is a result of knowing how to read the Old Testament. Well: how is that done?

Guidance from a Reformed scholar

John Stek, retired long-time Calvin Seminary professor and a translator of the NIV Bible, gives us an insightful perspective in his (unsigned) introduction to Joshua in the *NIV Study Bible*. Many Christians, he says, "relieve their ethical scruples" by concluding that Joshua and other troubling parts of the Old Testament Israelite story were written from a pre-Christian and even sub-Christian stage of moral development that must be repudiated and transcended in the light of Christ's New Testament teachings.

But that's not the answer to reading Joshua or other O.T. chronicles, says Stek. Though the oratorios evoked some just-war discussion in Handel's day, the book of Joshua doesn't address war as a philosophical or moral issue (and neither does Handel's oratorio). Its approach and content must be understood in the context of the history of redemption. Stek explains this well:

Joshua is not an epic account of Israel's heroic generation or the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan with the aide of her national deity. It is rather the story of how God, to whom the whole world belongs, at one stage in the history of redemption reconquered a portion of the earth from the powers of this world that had claimed it for themselves, defending their claims by force of arms and reliance on their false gods. It tells how God commissioned his people, under his servant Joshua, to take Canaan in his name out of the hands of the idolatrous and dissolute Canaanites (whose measure of sin was now full; see Gen. 15:16). It tells how he aided them in that enterprise and gave them conditional tenancy in his land in fulfillment of the ancient pledge.

Handel's oratorio audiences seemed to recognize this. The Canaanite nations understood their own formation and power as gifts from their gods – as an indication of the strength of those gods. When God used Israel to triumph over those nations one after another, defeating absolutely their helpless

idols of wood and stone, it testified to the nations, to Israel, and to all observers, that the God of Israel is the true, living God whose right to claim the whole world is absolute.

The land the Israelites conquered ultimately belonged to God because he created it; he had the right and desire to cleanse it of the paganism which denied him, a denial which had resulted in horrific practices (including human sacrifice). Israel was not given *carte blanche* to wage war and subdue other nations on its own behalf or as a kind of "pet" of God. Israel was not to seize war spoils for themselves; Achan's covetous flouting of this directive (an episode in the book of Joshua which the oratorio doesn't specifically mention) and the death of him and his family as a result is one example of the tragic consequences of doing so. Much later, Saul's attempt to do the same ultimately resulted in his and his sons' loss of the kingdom (covered in Handel's oratorio *Saul*).

Israel was given the chance to be, and was expected to be, a witness to God's righteous rule, and a blessing to the nations. But when the Israelites themselves disavowed God, again and again succumbing to the lure of the pagan gods, impotent as those gods were, Israel ceased to be either a witness or a blessing. When they continued to ignore God, his patience finally ran out. They forfeited the land won and were sent into exile, the 70-year Babylonian captivity.

This is part of the *Christian* story because both testaments of Scripture point to Christ. The Lord's triumph had and has eschatological significance far beyond those Old Testament battles and wars lost and won. In Stek's words:

It was also warning to the nations that the irresistible advance of the kingdom of God would ultimately disinherit all those who opposed it, giving place in the earth only to those who acknowledge and serve the Lord. At once an act of redemption and of judgement, it gave notice of the outcome of history and anticipated the eschatological destiny of mankind and the creation.... The God of the second Joshua (Jesus) is the God of the first Joshua also. Although now for a time he reaches out to the whole world with the gospel (and commissions people urgently to carry his offer of peace of all nations), the sword of his judgement waits in the wings – and his second Joshua will wield it.

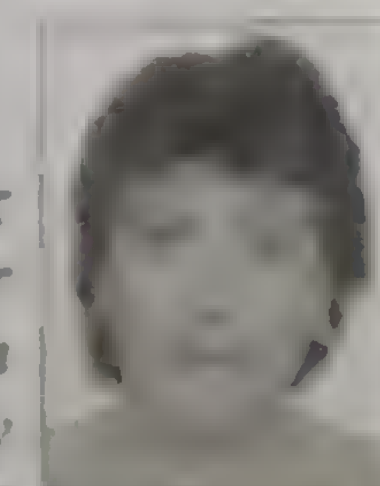
And so, Handel's audiences relished his Old Testament oratorios, music and text together. And we can still. They often speak in a surprisingly direct and poignant manner if we have ears to hear.

The famous Bible commentator Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a non-Conformist (a Presbyterian, and thus a Calvinist), but his immensely popular commentary conveys a view in its introduction to Joshua with which most other Christians would have agreed, during Henry's lifetime and three and four decades later when Handel was immersed in writing oratorios. Henry makes it quite personal, just as Handel's oratorio does:

Here is the history of Israel's passing into the land of Canaan.... The power and truth of God in fulfilling his promises to Israel, and in executing his justly threatened vengeance on the Canaanites, are wonderfully displayed. This should teach us to regard the tremendous curses denounced in the word of God against impenitent sinners, and to seek refuge in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps that's what I should tell my audience on May 10?

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantila@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com



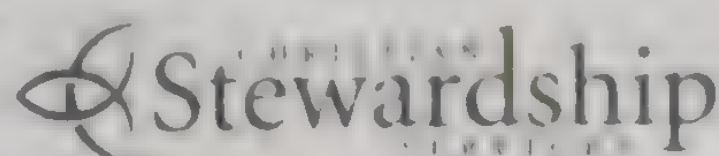
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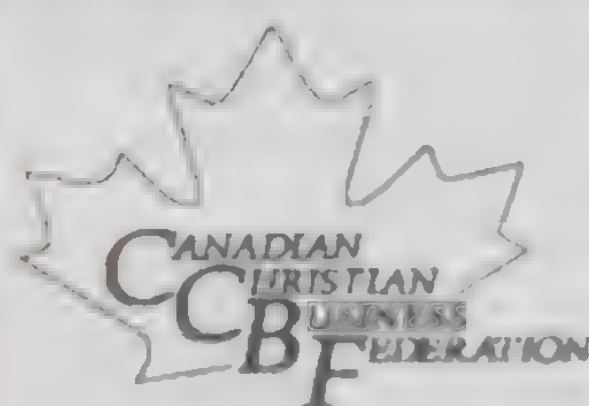
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Genesis 1:22

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Colossians 2:6.7

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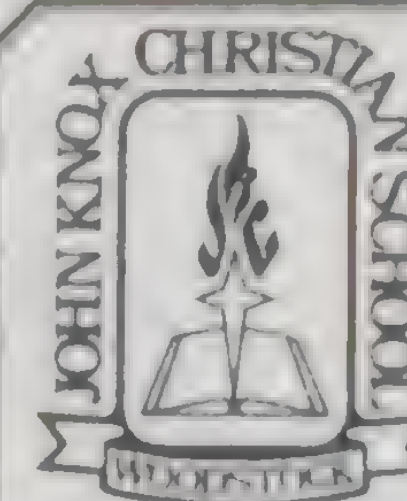
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Dinner & Program: Social 6:00 p.m., Dinner 6:30 p.m.
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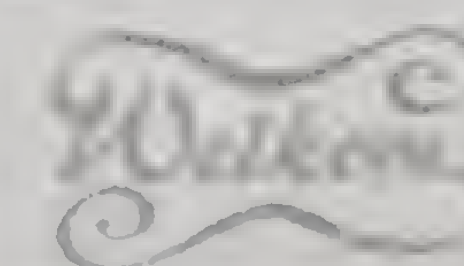
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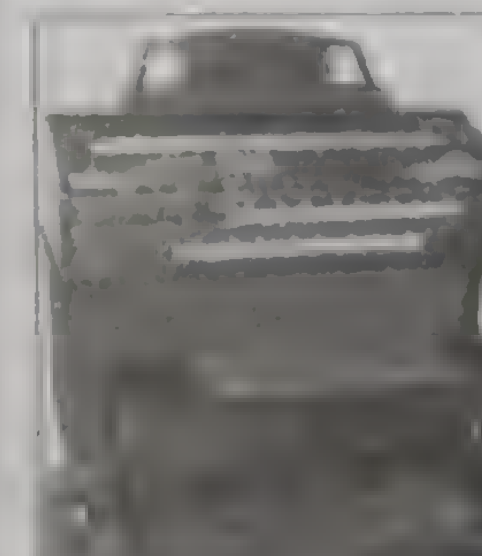
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Rev. Herman Praamsma will be preaching.

**Tot
Ziens**

Obituaries

The Lord is my Shepherd

Workum Fr. the Neth. Grimsby, Ont
April 4, 1918 April 4, 2008

Peacefully, at Shalom Manor, in Grimsby Ontario
the Lord took home, his child

MRS. MINNIE WESTERHUIS (Koornstra)

wife of the late Anne (Andy) Westerhuis

Dear Mother and Beppe of:

Jane & Louie Regnerus of Grimsby

Andrew & Melinda - Cassandra, Andrew James
Roger & Elma - Marita, Amanda, Quinton, Natasha
Marlene

Lloyd

Julie & Ben Winter of Stoney Creek

Mary-Joe & Mike Steenbeek - Jennifer, Kathryn, Julia

Susan & Bill Fledderus - Rudy, Nathan

Harold & Robin Winter - Christopher, Rebekah,

Suzanna, Isaiah, Abigail

Ronald †

Joanne & Simon Heeg of Simcoe

Dirk James & Hilda - Ryan, Daniel, Jeremy, Alex

Marsha & Ron Haverkamp - Nicole, Jessica

Andy & Jenny - Wyatt, John Walker Robert

Yvonne

Robert †

Shirley Westerhuis of Dunnville

Paul Huizinga

Leanne & Darryl Barless - Samantha, Joshua, Jordyn

Carolyn & Scott Mills - Hanna

Sharlene Huizinga

The funeral service was held on April 7, 2008

at Jarvis Christian Reformed Church.

Pastor Harold Winter officiated.

Correspondence: Mrs. Jane Regnerus

18 Geddes St, Grimsby ON L3M 1J4

Hoogeveen, Drente

May 23, 1913

Strathroy, Ontario

April 4, 2008

JANTJE (Jean) VANDERHILL (nee Zylstra)

has gone to be with her Lord on April 4, 2008
Beloved wife of the late husband Gerrit (1991)

Loving mother of

Gerry & Ron Fisher, *Waterloo, ON*

Melanie Fisher, *Grand Rapids, MI*

Tim & Jeanne Fisher - Joel, Eric, Trent, *Waterloo, ON*

Michael & Amy Fisher - Owen and Isabel, *Waterloo, ON*

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Stacey Vanderhill and Damiano, *Samia, ON*

The family will miss Mother dearly.

Our comfort is that she is at rest with her Lord and Saviour.

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Ps. 119:105

Correspondence: Robert Vanderhill,

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Classifieds / Job Opportunities

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secretary@covenant-church.ca,
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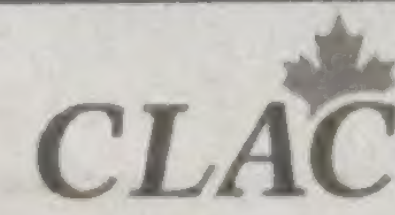
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Details for both positions can be found at:

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Candidates with a strong commitment to a Reformed, biblical faith and the mission of Dordt College, and an interest in working with students, faculty and staff on a Christian campus should send a cover letter and resume to Susan Droog, Director of Human Resources, at the address below. A review of applications received will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

Contact: **Human Resources, Dordt College,**
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Email: hr@dordt.edu
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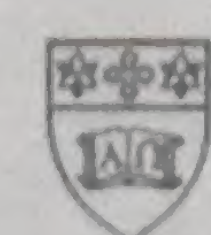
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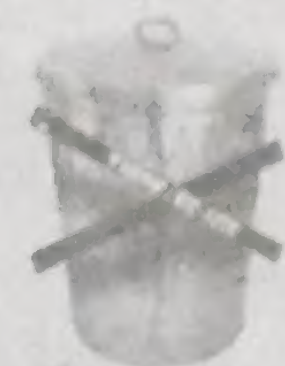
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- Plan for a pesticide-free garden



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Osoyoos - CJOR 8:00 am 1490
Prince George - CIRX.. 7:00 am 94.3
Princeton - CHOR..... 8:00 am 1400
Smithers - CFBV..... 9:15 am 1230
Vernon - CJIB 9:30 pm 94

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ 8:30 am 1340
Edmonton - CJCA..... 6:00 pm 930

MANITOBA

Winnipeg - CKJS 9:00 am 810

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Atikokan - CFAK 9:30 am 1240
Chatham - CFCO 6:30 am 630
Hamilton - CHAM 7:30 am 820
London - CKSL..... 7:00 am 1410
Owen Sound - CFOS .. 7:00 am 560
Sarnia - CHOK..... 7:30 am 1070
Stratford - CJCS..... 8:45 am 1240
Wingham - CKNX 10:30 am 920
Woodstock - CJFH..... 7:30 am 94.03

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ 9:00 am 94.1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown - CFCY.. 7:00 am 630

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Digby - CKDY 6:00 am 1420
Halifax - CFDR..... 8:30 am 780
Liverpool - CKBW 7:30 am 94.5
Kentville - CKEN 8:30 am 1490
Middleton - CKAD 8:30 am 1350

Shelburne - CKBW 7:30 am 93.1
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Rocky Mtn.House CHBW 94.5 FM. Sun. 8:30 am

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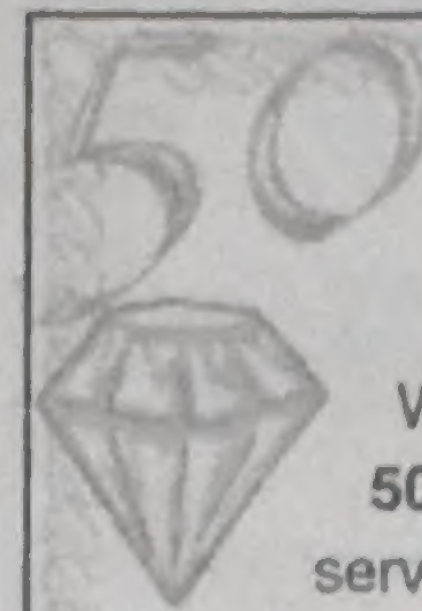
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

- May 2** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (Music Director, St. Jude's Anglican Church) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 2** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Dr. Christiaan Teeuwsen (Music Director at MacNab St. Presbyterian Church, Hamilton) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 2-4** Marriage encounter weekend in **London, ON**. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_Registration@reformedme.org
- May 3, 5** Friendship day, in **Burlington** sponsored by The Canada Netherlands Friendship Association. For more information visit www.cnfa.ca or contact Jack Van der Laan 905 332 7000 or Hans Kloet 905 336 7184.
- May 9** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Eric Obsborne (Minister of Music, Trinity Anglican Church, Cambridge) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 10** Institute for Christian Studies 40th anniversary dinner and silent auction. **Toronto**. For tickets see www.icscanada.edu/40thanniversary.
- May 14** Reception for Rev. Graham Morbey as he concludes his 28 yrs as chaplain to Wilfred Laurier University & University of **Waterloo**. 4:30-6:30 pm. For more information: John Mohle 519-343-2456 x21
- May 16** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Alison Clark (Music Director, St. Mark's Anglican Church, **Brantford**) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 23** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring James Noakes (Music Director at St. Paul's Cathedral, London) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, Brantford, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 23, 25** Bethel CRC, **Dunnville** 50th anniversary. Celebration Dinner to be held on Friday, May 23, and a special service on Sunday, May 25. For more information contact the church at BethelCRC@mountaincable.net or see ad this issue.
- May 24** Liberation choir spring interlude concerts 7:30 pm. at Crosspoint CRC, **Brampton**. See ad this issue.
- May 24, 25** **Chatham** Christian Schools 50th anniversary celebration. Open house 1-4 and evening program. Sunday worship. More information to follow in the April 14 issue or visit www.chathamchristian.ca
- May 25** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Herman Praamsma will be preaching.
- May 30** Liberation choir spring interlude concerts 7:30 pm. at Mountainview CRC, **Grimsby**. See ad this issue.
- May 30** Noon-hour Organ Recital featuring Dr. Christiaan Teeuwsen (Music Director at MacNab St. Presbyterian Church, Hamilton) at St. Jude's Anglican Church, **Brantford**, 12:15 pm. (wvan@rogers.com)
- May 31, June 7, June 8** Calvary CRC, **Ottawa**, 50th anniversary events and worship. Join us in celebrating at events on May 31, June 7 (by reservation) and the morning worship service at 10 am on June 8. More information at www.calvarycra.ca or contact Linda at 613-821-1911 or lindamallette@hotmail.com
- June 2-5** Milk & Honey summer festival at Redeemer University College. For more information or to register, call 905.648.2139 ext.4521 or go to www.redeemer.ca under News & Events
- June 6 & 7** The 50th anniversary of **Wellandport** Christian School Plan Reunion Celebration. See ad.
- June 11** Hollandse Dag, 10 am, at the **Moorefield** community centre. For more information contact Hilbert Rumph at 519-638-2053 or see ad in following issues.
- June 21, 22** All Nations CRC anniversary celebrations. **Halifax**, NS The celebration begins 6 p.m. June 21 with a traditional All Nations Potluck, followed by a variety show. On Sunday we will have a special worship service at 10 a.m., which will be followed by a picnic. We would love to see past members and old friends again - email info@allnationscra.org or call 902-429-7136. See ad this issue.



May 28, 1958 - 2008
BETHEL CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
 of Dunnville, Ontario, Canada

With thankfulness to God, Bethel will be observing their **50th Anniversary**, celebrating God's goodness with a special service on Sunday, May 25, 2008 and a Celebration Dinner to be held on Friday, May 23, 2008. All members and former members are heartily welcome to join us in this celebration of God's grace.

For more information contact the church
 at BethelCRC@mountaincable.net

ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF HALIFAX

invites you to a celebration of God's goodness and faithfulness.

On Saturday and Sunday, June 21 and 22, 2008,

we will mark **fifty years** as a Christian Reformed congregation in Halifax. The celebration begins 6 p.m. June 21 with a traditional All Nations Potluck, followed by a variety show. On Sunday we will have a special worship service at 10 a.m., which will be followed by a picnic. We would love to see past members and old friends again - email info@allnationscra.org or call 902-429-7136 ahead of time, so we can prepare a special welcome for you.

"Praise the LORD, all you nations. For great is his love toward us."

WELLANDPORT CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

50th Anniversary 1958-2008



50th anniversary of Wellandport Christian School is a time to reflect, with gratitude, God's faithfulness to the WCS community.

Plan to attend.

Friday, June 6, 2008

Celebration Program

Riverside CRC, Wellandport

7:30 pm

Saturday, June 7, 2008

Reunion at the School

1:00 to 5:00 pm

1959-60 Staff



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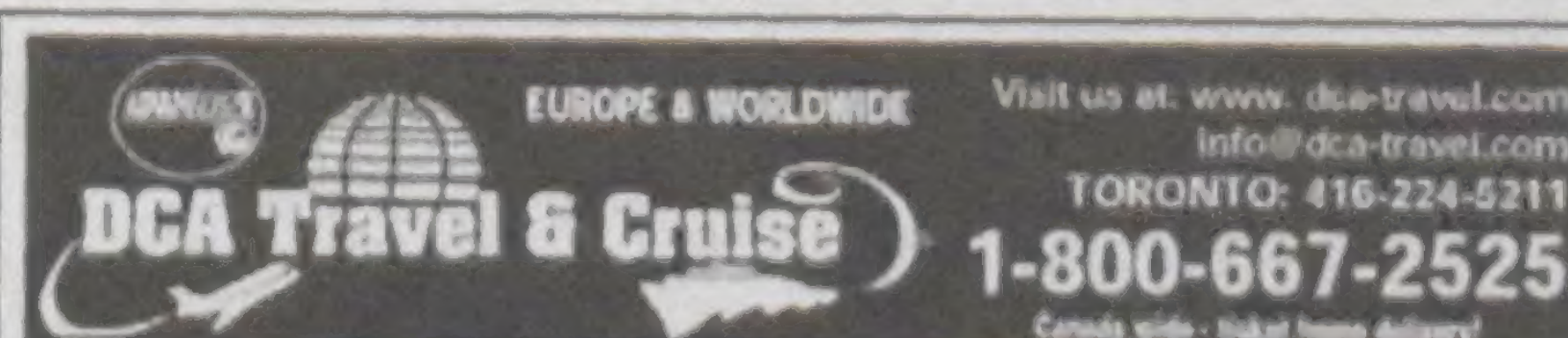
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News

Has Earth entered a new epoch – the Anthropocene

Robert C. Cowen

Geologists wonder if they should add a new epoch to the geological time scale. They call it the Anthropocene – the epoch when, for the first time in Earth's history, humans have become a predominant geophysical force. Naming such a new epoch would also recognize that humans now share responsibility with natural forces for the state of our planet's ecological environment.

Geologists have been using the term informally for at least half a decade. Now members of the Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society of London have laid out the case for giving the term official scientific status.

Presenting that case in the February issue of *GSA Today* magazine, the team notes that "since the start of the industrial revolution, Earth has endured changes sufficient to leave a global stratigraphic signature." It is different from anything found in the entire geological record up to that point. That means the team expects future geologists examining this record will recognize a distinct break with the Holocene ("recent whole") epoch that covers the past 10,000 years.

Atmospheric chemist and Nobel Prize winner Paul Crutzen at Germany's Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Mainz says this presents humanity with an awesome challenge. He has pointed out that what the London team calls the "novel biotic, sedimentary, and geochemical change" now being written into the geological record reflects the emergence of human intelligence and technology as a geophysical force. On his website, he explains this means that "to develop a world-wide accepted strategy leading to sustainability of ecosystems against human stresses will be one of the great future tasks

of mankind." He adds that it will take "intensive research and wise application of the knowledge" gained to develop sustainable environmental management.

Soil scientist Daniel Richter at Duke University in Durham, N.C., would agree. In an announcement of his work last month, he explained that human-induced changes to the world's soils are enough in themselves to justify saying we have entered the "Anthropocene (or man-made) age." He notes, "With more than half of all soils on Earth now being cultivated for food crops, grazed, or logged for wood, how to sustain Earth's soils is becoming a major scientific and policy issue."

He adds, "If humanity is to succeed in the coming decades, we must interact much more positively with the great diversity of Earth's soils."

Dr. Richter cites Africa as an example of this challenge. There, widespread farming without nutrient recycling threatens continent-wide soil infertility. He adds that, globally, "expanding cities, industries, mining, and transportation systems all impact soil in ways that are far more permanent than cultivation." Richter is part of an international group that has set up the first global long-term soil research network. This will help develop the knowledge needed for worldwide soil management.

In making the case for a new epoch, geologists such as the London team cite many other aspects of human geophysical impact. It will be up to the International Commission on Stratigraphy to decide whether or not to establish a new Anthropocene epoch. But it is clear that Earth has taken an unprecedented geological turn in our time and there is no turning back.

Interview with Leo Severino, Producer of Bella

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Leo Severino, the producer of *Bella* (see review on page 7), graduated from the University of Southern California Law School in 1999. He started his career as a young lawyer in the London and Los Angeles offices of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, one of the world's largest and prestigious law firms. While there he soon found his niche in the Latin American Corporate Transactions department. However, his heart had been set on Hollywood since his 1997 summer internship with 20th Century Fox. Two years later, Severino switched careers to entertainment law.

In 2001, he moved to the Fox Networks Group. He worked there for three years as Director of Business Affairs, handling the national programming division. A providential meeting in 2004 with Eduardo Verástegui – who performs the role of Jose in *Bella* – resulted in Leo's departure from 20th Century Fox to become a third partner and producer in charge of Business Affairs for Metanoia Films.

Christian Courier interviewed Severino by e-mail to learn more about the production company and *Bella*'s impact on viewers.

C.C.: *How did Metanoia Productions get started and how did you become involved with it? Does the name of the company have any biblical significance? What is the mandate of Metanoia Productions?*

Severino:

Metanoia is a Greek word that literally means "a change of heart or mind; a turning from darkness to light." When we were thinking of names, it was the perfect choice because each of us had experienced great transformations in our lives, both personally and professionally. It also describes our mission of making quality films that not only entertain, but also inspire people to live better lives, to love more, and to be light in an often dark world.

C.C.: *When I watched Bella, I noticed that you neither sermonized nor moralized about the abortion issue. How difficult is it, while trying to engage secular culture on such a sensitive issue, to refrain from doing just that?*

Severino:

We didn't want to make a political film or a preachy film. We wanted to make a film that humanizes a woman facing an incredibly difficult choice.

C.C.: *I also noticed that you developed the contrasting themes of chaos and communion through scenes where food was prepared or consumed in the restaurant and in the home of Jose's parents. Why did you choose to develop these themes in this way?*

Severino:

The main thing we were trying to do with those scenes was to be authentic. We wrote based on our own memories of what family dinners were like when we were growing up, or what it was like to work in a restaurant. And I think because of that, those scenes come across as very realistic and show the audience the positive side of Latino culture and family that is so rarely seen in cinema.

C.C.: *How has the work you've done on Bella had an impact on your personal faith journey?*

Severino:

It has been amazing to see God work. It's a tremendous faith-builder to completely throw yourself into a vision that God gives you, especially one that seems so impossible at the beginning.

C.C.: *What perceptible impact has Bella had so far on those who have seen it? What continuing impact do you hope the movie will have?*

Severino:

I can't tell you how many people have told us that they are now planning to adopt children after seeing our film. There have even been a number of women that have told us that they were planning on having an abortion, but changed their minds after seeing *Bella*. None of us ever expected that this film would save and change so many lives. We hope it continues to inspire, entertain, and warm people's hearts for years to come.



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CrossPoint CRC

(Formerly known as the Second CRC)

444 Steeles Ave West, Brampton, L6T 3N2

May 30, 2008 at 7.30 pm

Mountainview CRC

290 Main St.E., Grimsby, L3M 1P8

Director - Rob Kinnear

Guest Organists - Chris Dawes & Ian Sadler

Tickets \$12.00

Contact Tom Overbeek at tom.overbeek@sympatico.ca, 519-941-8518 or call 905-906-5207

Tickets available at the door www.liberationchoir.com

